FOLK AND FAIRY TALES

BY MRS BURTON HARRISON: ILLUSTD BY WALTER CRANE

WARD AND DOWNEY, LONDON

"He found himself again in the corner of the drawing-room sofa."
—REGI'S OWN STORY, p. 14.

Folk and Fairy Tales

BY

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DEDICATED

TO

FAIRFAX, FRANK AND ARCHY

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REGI'S OWN STORY.

CHRISTMAS was close at hand, and the weather in New York was nipping cold. A light rain, freezing as it fell in the morning, had glazed the pavements with a coat of ice, while the trees in the parks, and the endless maze of telegraph and telephone wires along the streets, were cased in shining crystal.

During the last hour of the afternoon, before the electric light had begun to shed its white radiance over the chilly world below, a little boy's face had been pressed against the window pane in the drawing-room of a spacious house in upper Fifth Avenue. Regi had exhausted the resources of nursery and play-room. He had tumbled and jumped in solitude in his gymnasium; had printed, on his new press, a card apiece, as a Christmas offering for Papa and Fred, "with the compliments of Reginald Arthur Standish, Jr.;" had roller-skated along the maids' passage-way until those long-suffering females, sympathetic as they were in general with the companionless little fellow, fairly put him to rout with good-humored scoldings. Regi's next act was to make a foray upon the glass dishes set out in the butler's pantry for dessert, where, after capturing some nuts and figs, he exercised Bran, his hound, in the new trick of bounding up to catch a lump of sugar as it was tossed into the air.

But, spite of these excitements, time seemed to drag. There was no sign of a cab driving up to the door, and of Fred—dear, splendid Fred—jumping out of it with his bags and sticks and umbrellas—the sight Regi most longed to see. Fred was his big brother, the pride of his youthful heart—a dreadfully old person, who must have been at least nineteen—and who had not been at home since returning to college after the Thanksgiving holidays.

To make my young readers better understand the wonderful events befalling Regi during this Christmas-tide, I must go back a little to tell something of his previous life. The Standishes had not always lived in this fine house in a spacious avenue. The home where Regi was born, and where his poor mamma had died, was in a more unpretending quarter of the town. He could well remember the sunny nursery of the old house, with its threadbare carpet, the open fire guarded by a high screen, ivies and geraniums growing in the windows, and the walls and door panels decorated by Fred and himself with cut-out pictures of the liveliest description. In that nursery, where Biddy Flanagan, familiarly styled "Chickabiddy" by her charge, reigned with loving sway, the furniture had passed through various stages of dismemberment and scratching, until scarcely an article of it could boast the full allowance of knobs, arms, feet, or polished surface. Enchanting to Regi's memory were those battered chests of drawers and armless rocking-chairs, and, above all, the closet near at hand, where a rocking-horse, without mane or tail or eyes, kept guard over invalid tin soldiers, the ragged remnant of Noah's train, torn books, and wrecked toys, in a delightful hodge-podge. Where were they now, these signs and tokens of a boisterous babyhood?

Some three years before the opening of our story, Regi's mother had passed away from life, and his father, always a busy man, had plunged deeper into the affairs that kept him almost a stranger to his family. Soon after, Miss Lynch appeared upon the scene, and suddenly, no one knew exactly how or why, honest Mistress Flanagan, shedding a Niagara of tears and blessings over her nurseling, betook herself and her belongings out of the house where she had lived since Fred wore kilted petticoats. Regi, found by the new governess kicking on the nursery floor and howling for his Chickabiddy, was requested by that lady to accompany her on a visit to his grandmamma's, a proceeding at all times calculated to subdue the infant spirit. Regi owed his governess to the recommendation of grandmamma, herself an invalid old lady with nerves, who lived in a great silent house in Washington Square, attended by a companion whose duty it was to talk about medicines and symptoms, to fetch shawls and to feed the cockatoo. After a call on grandmamma, the little boy would prance and caper like a colt in pasture, when he got into the open air again.

Miss Lynch was a tall, gray woman, with cold eyes, and a measured way of speaking. She had a rigid back, and once, when, in the fulness of his affectionate spirit, the boy ventured upon giving her a hug, he was awed by the creaking of whalebone of which she seemed to be composed. At her waist she wore a bunch of clanking keys, and a silver watch that Regi came to look upon as the controlling power of his life. At the bidding of that monitor he had to get up, to bathe, to dress, to eat his porridge, to study, to exercise, to go to bed. He sometimes wished that he might treat this tyrant of a watch as the March Hare served the Hatter's,

at Alice's Mad Tea Party—dipping it into a cup of hot tea, or putting the best butter into the works with a bread-knife!

Miss Lynch was never hot, or cold, or tired, or hungry, or glad, or sorry. Neither was she unkind to her pupil; but he soon learned not to turn to her for sympathy or for the cheery companionship his nature craved. This he found, first of all, in his beloved Fred, then in the maid-servants and in a young footman recently employed about the house, or else in the boys met at dancing-school or gymnasium. Such intercourse was the more precious in its rarity. It was astonishing how this well-regulated little person managed to pick up the current phrases of boy lingo, their fashions and their fads, in spite of watchful Miss Lynch. It was now just a year since they had moved into the grand house —Regi vaguely understanding that his father's fortune had increased in the rapid American style. Their present abode was one of the handsomest of a showy neighborhood of brown-stone palaces. Its windows were kaleidoscopes of tinted glass, its walls were hung with embroidered stuffs or decked with traceries of gold and silver. The floors shone like mirrors, over which Regi was forever tumbling and skating on loose rugs and skins. His own bedroom, in strong contrast with his earlier nursery, resembled the interior of a cathedral, having a vaulted ceiling and high latticed windows, where he had to stand on tip-toe on a gothic bench to catch a glimpse of the neighbors' linen fluttering in the back yards below. He had a carved-oak dressing-table like a shrine, and a carved-oak bed like a pew, whence, at punctually seven o'clock A.M., Miss Lynch extracted him, to take a bracing shower-bath before beginning the round of duties prescribed for the day's observance.

In the evening, when his father came in for a late dinner, it was Regi's custom to await him on the rug before the dining-room fire, and to sit with him while the soup was served. But Mr. Standish, always a reserved man, had become more than ever silent and abstracted. He would kiss Regi with a grave smile, inquire about his studies, exchange a few commonplace remarks with Miss Lynch, and then relapse into his own absorbing thoughts.

Certainly the bright spot in Regi's life was Fred. Fred, big, strong and active, with his fearless speech and laugh, his quick wit, his boyish readiness for fun! It seemed cruel that Fred should have to go to college, his little brother thought, lying awake sometimes at night to long for his hero's presence, until tears wet his pillow. You are not to think, however, that Regi was a moping boy or a dull one; on the contrary, his was a merry little soul, ready at any minute to break into laughter, to conjure up a trick, and to respond to the faintest advance of good-fellowship from any one with whom he might be thrown momentarily in contact. At seven years old he was a manly fellow, in all things like those of you who rush into the house after school like a whirlwind, throwing books, overcoat, and cap six ways for Sunday, to bestow delightful rough kisses on your mother's hair and cheeks. But he had a soft side to him, had Regi; and his large dark eyes could become tender and pleading, while his hand longed to steal into somebody's warm clasp, and his cheek craved to rest on some spot where it was welcome. When in this mood, he was restless and often dreamy. A little congenial company would probably have driven out of him the spirit that prompted the lad to go off into a room by himself, and to sit and

wish for what he could not put into words. He had a fashion of wandering about the big house, and fancying all kinds of queer things, that you might think foolish, if they were printed here. His favorite play was imaginary conversations between himself and certain objects, about which he liked to wonder and to speculate. If Regi had lived in the country, there would have been voices enough to answer him, from the streams and leaves and birds and insects. But here he had to be content with making-up responses to his own questions. For one thing, he used to suppose himself to be living in the pictures on the walls. When he was tired of following the cows to pasture in the clear light of early morning in one painting, he had but to step over the frame into the next, to join a fierce tide of battle sweeping up some fortified height, and to snatch a victorious flag from the hands of a wounded comrade who had carried it over the rampart.

The large drawing-room was Regi's favorite retiring place during the hours that he could call his own, partly because it was so generally deserted, but chiefly because there hung a lovely portrait of his mother, recently painted by a celebrated artist from a photograph taken in her girlish days. Following out a fancy of his own, the artist had robed the beautiful young woman in gleaming satin, edged at the throat and sleeves with fur ; and her fair neck looked like a swan's, Regi thought, admiring her with all the chivalry of his boy's nature. He used to wonder if this lovely vision could be made of the same flesh and blood as his grim governess ; and a feeling of yearning sadness came into his heart when he realized that the fullest force of his vivid imaginings could not bring him a kiss from those lips, or a touch from that slender hand.

In addition to pictures, the drawing-room was full of ornaments, and of curious and valuable objects, heaped upon brackets and tables, or shut behind glass in antique cabinets. Regi's father, in some of his rare moments of expansion, had led the child from one spot to another, explaining the origin and history of his treasures, while promising that some day he, too, should visit the countries from which they severally came. In this way the contents of the room had become to him familiar companions. Miss Lynch, treating them as geographical finger-posts, also encouraged her pupil's acquaintance with the various bits of bric-a-brac; but, if possible, Regi contrived to make his visits to the drawing-room *without* his worthy governess.

On the afternoon when Regi is first seen by you, all his faculties were alert and concentrated on the things of every day. Bran, tired of gazing through the window, stalked round the room to select such a place as he might deem, in every respect, suitable and convenient for his dogship to take a nap in, and returned to stretch himself on the rug at his master's feet. But, though daylight was fast fading, Regi remained glued to his post. He was just beginning to invent a dialogue, in which the street-lamp, with her fan of gas, should remonstrate against the lofty white globe of the electric light for presuming to make her look so yellow by contrast, when a party of street-boys, in thin jackets and ragged comforters, arriving for a slide on the frozen gutter, distracted him. In the spirit of the little Louis Napoleon, who, at the palace window, begged leave to play in the lovely mud-puddle opposite, Regi ardently desired to join their sport. He laughed and clapped his hands in sympathy, until the boys scattered, and he became conscious of a frozen

tip to his nose. Then Regi turned round to arouse his sleeping Bran.

"I don't believe he will ever come, old fellow!" he said, in a disconsolate voice; and at that moment a servant entered the room to light it, upon whom the little boy fastened eagerly.

"Is that you, Tom?" he said; "I'm just about tired out, waiting for my brother."

"Oh! don't you know, Master Regi," said the sympathetic youth, "there's been a telegram to Barnes to say we aren't to expect Mr. Fred to dinner, anyhow, as he may not come till late."

What a disappointment! Regi's heart swelled; and he longed to cry outright, but desisted manfully in the presence of the footman, who lingered for awhile, trying to make matters livelier, going out at last, rather discomfited at his unwonted failure to entertain.

Then Regi curled up on a sofa, and cried heartily. To do without Fred for several hours longer, perhaps until to-morrow, seemed a thing impossible.

Early that morning, in answer to a dispatch telling her of serious illness in her sister's family, Miss Lynch had set off on a journey to a distant town. It was the first time since she had lived under the Standish roof that such a thing as absence from her post had happened. Regi tried his best to feel sorry; but, do what he would, little ripples of exultant laughter rose to his lips at thought of his unwonted freedom. And Fred was coming too! It was altogether a distracting combination. What projects for Christmas fun were teeming in his brain! How he would coax Fred to ask that he might sit up to dinner every night, to listen, flushed and wide-eyed, to the story of his brother's college experiences! He would have another

expedition to buy Christmas gifts, like the memorable one of the year before, when, after an exciting ride down town on the elevated railway, the brothers had walked hand in hand along a great thoroughfare. Regi remembered every incident of that agreeable afternoon. There, toward Christmas time, a hundred venders on the curbstone blocked the way, and in the clear, cold afternoon, all was merriment. The little boy in his long brown overcoat and cap edged with otter fur, clinging to his brother's hand, trudging along and enjoying himself till his cheeks bloomed like winter roses, had won many a friendly glance from passers-by. Regi's store of pocket-money had been spent at last, and his arms and pockets were crowded with all sorts of curious odds and ends, selected by himself as gifts to the household at home. Suddenly, he had stopped short, begging Fred to go ahead a little way. Fred complied, while Regi felt in all his pockets, with an expression of dismay.

"Oh! dear!" he had said to himself. "If I haven't gone and forgotten Fred; and I have but one single penny left. I can't borrow from him, to buy his own Christmas gift. I wish I hadn't spent seventy-five cents on that jumping mouse for the cook's husband. What will one penny buy?"

At this point, his eye had lit upon a stall for the sale of cheap stationery, and, recalling the fact that Fred had complained of finding no blotter on his bed-room writing table, Regi triumphantly purchased a small piece of pink blotting-paper, of which, carefully wrapped up, he had made the greatest mystery for the rest of the expedition. When they regained Broadway, Fred had called a cab—a hansom, to Regi's satisfaction—and getting in, with all their

parcels about them, ordered the man to drive to Delmonico's.

"Where are we going now, Fred?" Regi had asked, beginning to feel his fatigue.

Fred had laughed, but would not answer. Soon they drew up in front of a brilliantly lighted establishment, where, received by bowing functionaries, they were ushered into a large room filled with groups at little tables. With a lazy gesture, Fred had pushed a bill of fare at Regi, requesting him to choose his own dinner, as, for this once, the little boy was to be allowed to forego the bread-and-milk and jam of his daily evening diet. Poor Regi had floundered about among the French dishes in despair, till Fred, coming to his aid, ordered consommé and chops and sundry unaccustomed dainties in the way of sweets, that his youthful guest still thought of longingly.

Ah! what delightful memories.

Regi recalled too the scene outside, when they came away from dinner at the restaurant on that occasion. Opposite them was the great square, transformed into a sheet of ice, the trees crystallized into a shining network and illuminated from above by a palpitating crown of electric stars. On the far, quiet side of the square, a church-spire rose into the deep blue sky, where a planet could be seen twinkling. A marked contrast were the western and southern sides, where the façade of hotels and the shops were ablaze with garish lights and Christmas greenery. In the shop windows, jets of gas in fanciful devices revealed marvels of confectionery, of books, pictures, hats, umbrellas, jewels, porcelain—everything to tempt depleted pocket-books. The weather was then, as now, bitterly cold. Horses and foot-passengers were sliding perilously

over glassy streets, but the sidewalks were black with a steady swarm of sight-seers, buyers, or tardy working folk ; and every one was good-humored, including the policemen who, "frosty but kindly," tramped their rounds.

It was a wonderful solace to the disappointed child to lie in a corner of the couch this evening, picturing to himself such simple pleasures as had their root in the coveted companionship of one so dearly loved. He stopped crying, by and by ; and through the sparkle of his tears, seemed to see a smile hovering over the lips of his mother's portrait looking down upon him.

"I'm afraid I mayn't sit up for Fred," he mused. "Oh ! I wish it were to-morrow morning, for I could go into his room and see him brush his hair and put his scarf on, and there wouldn't be all night between !"

They came to summon him to tea ; and his father, coming in after awhile, and seeing that he had been crying, kissed him more tenderly than usual and sent him off to bed with the assurance that Fred would be there to receive his morning greeting. Rosa, the chambermaid, was in waiting to see the little man to bed, and while disdaining her help except for some impossible buttons "away round at the back," his tongue wagged incessantly. He confided to her his woes and fears for the holidays.

"Oh ! Rosa, do you think there's any chance her sister's husband might keep ill—rather ill, you know ? Is flammingtery rheumatism very bad ?"

"Well, its meself too that wouldn't be grievin', if his attack was to be kind of tejus, Master Reginald," said plain-spoken Rosa. "Whin the cat's away the mice will play, and a little play won't hurt none of us these holiday times."

"Oh! but Rosa, she *can't* get back by to-morrow; and to-morrow maybe Fred will take me to see the shops and to buy Christmas things, again, Rosa! Do you know she's never let me hang up my stocking since I was a little boy—never since she came? She says it is wicked to tell children about Santa Claus, and that there isn't such a thing; and she just hates fairy-tales, too. I wonder if she knows everything, Rosa."

"She knows all she knows herself, and all that anybody else knows, too," said the irreverent Rosa, tucking the little boy into bed with her stout arms.

"Because, Rosa . . . . don't you tell anybody, but I can't help believing in Santa Claus . . a little . . . just a little, you know. Fellows at dancing-school tell me such dandy things he brings 'em. It isn't the toys I want, because I get lots. But it's the stocking, Rosa. My old Chickabiddy used to give me such a long one to hang up, and it was always cram-full, and had a real peppermint cane sticking out of the top of it. It was so nice, waking up in the dark, and feeling for the funny stiff toe dangling there by your bed. Chickabiddy told me she, herself, *saw* Santa Claus stuffing the things in; and I do love Chickabiddy."

"No more than she loves you, me poor darlin'," said Rosa, touched by a quaver in his voice. "What would you say if I told you Mistress Flanagan was married again, and gone to housekeepin'—which he's a plumber's man, and well-to-do—an' his first died of internal chills, and was buried beautiful, last Sunday was a twelvemonth since, and they livin' so comfortable and gintale in a flat with three boorders—and a turn-up bedstead in the parler for their two selves! Six foot two, an' never drinks a dhrop—an' one of their boorders is me mother's coosin's nephew—and Mrs. Flanagan that

was, Ryan that is, was asking him to enquire about you with tears in her eyes—me last Sunday out it was, he met me at me coosin's——"

"I've a great mind to ask Fred to take me to see Chickabiddy!" exclaimed Regi, sitting up in bed, possessed with a bold idea.

This and other exciting thoughts so overmastered him that, when Rosa had put out the candle and withdrawn to sit in the sewing-room near by, Regi could not rest. He tossed and plotted, and plotted and tossed. Twice did Rosa return to tuck him in before, at last, his even breathing announced him to be asleep. An hour later she heard him cry out, and went to him. Regi was sitting up in bed with outstretched arms, asking repeatedly for "Fred," "Fred." His ear, quicker than hers, had caught the sound of an arrival below stairs. Nothing would do but that Rosa should go forthwith to summon the traveller to his side; and down went the maid, with the request that Mr. Fred would "spake to Master Reginald," who was "afther bein' restless, and wouldn't be pacified at all, at all."

Up-stairs with quick strides came a pair of long legs, and across the floor to Regi's little bed. Bending down in the dark, Fred felt two warm arms close tight around his neck, and a fervent kiss print itself on his mouth.

"It's all right now, Fred," said a voice in something like a sob.

. . . .

Regi's Christmas bid fair to be a merry one. Not only did Miss Lynch telegraph that she should probably remain away for at least a fortnight, but his big brother, touched as well as flattered by his junior's loyalty, did his best to carry out the little schemer's

plans. Regi's simple pleasures were so readily accomplished that he began to feel as if it were all too pleasant to be real. And, at last, on Christmas Eve, the curious thing happened in Regi's house which affords the occasion for this book. I wish it might happen to more children than one ; and I hope that, before you have finished reading of what then befell Regi, you will agree with me.

It was just before midnight, when little hoofs were beating and little sleigh-bells were tinkling over other children's roofs, when Santa Claus, puffing and wheezing, was scrambling down other children's chimneys, that Regi thought he heard somebody speak his name. There he was, lying in his own bed, his eyes shut, his curly chestnut head and rose-leaf cheek pressed close against the pillow, his thoughts floating off into the silver mists of dreamland ! How could it be, then, that he found himself again in the corner of the drawing-room sofa, crying over Fred's delay ? And what voice was this, coming to him out of the shadows of the deserted room. It had a faint, far-away sound, such as follows a hand dropped upon the key-board of an old piano, long unused. After it, arose a medley of curious noises—the twang of ancient harp-strings, the clink of finest porcelain, the clatter of coarse pottery, the ring of metals, the rustle of costly stuffs. Gradually these sounds took articulate shape and were uttered in speech.

"Tell him stories ! Hum !" was spoken from the wall. "The child needs cheering, there's no doubt about it. Not a bad idea that of your's, Mr. Kettle."

"Some people take pleasure in miscalling names," was the answer from a table. "I would have you to know that I am of a Russian family, and that plain Kettle won't do for *me*, Mistress Dish."

"*Plaque*, if you please, *plaque*, my dear Monsieur Samovar."

"Ciel! how these plebeians quarrel over trifles," was borne to the listener on what seemed the perfumed breeze stirred by the flutter of a fan.

"Won't you chatterers keep the peace?" cut in a sharp, clear voice like a Spanish sword-blade. "Methinks it is a disposition natural to woman to waste time by the way."

Upon this, all the speakers chimed in at once, and a mighty hub-bub followed.

"Let *me* be heard," said a quiet voice, a little tinged with malice. "So long as all talk at once, we shall come to no conclusion. Suppose we leave it to the ladies to begin, and let the oldest one among them speak first."

Dead silence.

Regi began to understand that the disputants were no other than the various objects of ornament and curiosity disposed about the room, with which he had so often imagined himself in converse. And now, here they were, actually talking among themselves briskly, and in a tongue that he could understand!

"By the holy beard of the Prophet!" said a voice that came in tranquil puffs, like smoke from the bowl of a pipe, "there is nothing easier than for each of us to relate in turn some interesting experience of his past life. Such a diversion will of a surety smoothe away wrinkles from the brow of care, and inspire the heart of youth to thoughts of cheerfulness."

"Cuckoo! Let *me* tell a story!" interrupted a lively speaker.

"That's certainly our old clock," said Regi, to himself. "But it's all very queer. I wonder how I can be

in two places at once. I didn't feel myself getting out of bed to come down here into the drawing-room, and yet here I am. If I were to call out suddenly, what would they do? I want to shout, dreadfully, but I want to listen, too. If they are going to tell me stories, it's very good of them. Hallo, there's another speaking."

"Seeing that we have but from now till Twelfth Night in which to parley," interposed a hearty voice coming from a settle of old English oak by the fireplace, "my counsel is like that of our Arab friend here, that each in turn conjure up some right merry tale of long ago for the younker's entertainment. I've not forgot the days when I was young, ho! ho! Beshrew me if I have!"

"'Tis agreed that the hour be that of twilight," came in a sentimental whisper from the harp. And while Regi was wondering what a younker is, and whether he was really the object of their conference, the discussion began over again, till his brain whirled in trying to keep pace with the busy talkers. Then it seemed to him that he saw a smile on the face of his mother's picture. And next, Regi was drifting away from the corner of the drawing-room sofa, back into his familiar little bed. Opening his eyes for a moment, he saw the circle of light from the shaded night-lamp dance upon the ceiling overhead.

"Then it was nothing but a dream," he thought, drowsily; "oh! how I wish it would come true," and with that, rolling over again, he was soon sound asleep.

And now, in a neighboring tower, the joy-bells rang out midnight. Christmas had come. Other bells caught up the echo of the first, and a merry song they chanted over the sleeping and the watching, to whom it bore the burden of love, peace and good-will.

THE SAMOVAR'S STORY.

On Christmas Day it was, after a sleigh-ride in the Park, that Regi, left by his father and Fred to his own devices, came into the drawing-room to lie on the wolf-skin in front of the big brass fire-dogs on the hearth, where a couple of logs were burning away contentedly without making any superfluous effort to break into a blaze.

Except for the glow of this tranquil fire, there was little light in the heavily curtained room, and Regi lay, turning over in his mind a number of pleasant things that had happened to him during the day, deciding finally that the next best thing to a swift dash over the snow behind papa's roans, was to come indoors without finding Lynchy in waiting with a lecture.

Happening to turn his lazy eyes in the direction of a claw-footed mahogany corner-table, he was struck with the unusual appearance of animation in a Samovar, or Russian tea-urn, standing there upon a tray. He heard a bubbling sound within its brass-bound sides. Directly afterward, in a puffing sort of way, like a fat person rather out of breath, the Samovar spoke to him:

"I am happy, my dear young friend, to have been selected by my honorable companions in your father's respectable collection, as the person whose place

in the community entitles him to first address you. For reasons unnecessary to explain, quite a number of us—all pieces of reputable bric-a-brac—have entered into an agreement to contribute to the entertainment of your Christmas holidays by narrating, in turn, at any hour of the day when you choose to enter here, alone, a story illustrating the manners, customs and traditions of our respective native lands."

"Goodness!" interrupted Regi. "It's splendid, you know, and I'm awfully obliged to you; but how you do puff and jerk your words out! I never heard anything like it—but perhaps that's a Russian custom?"

"Not at all!" returned the Samovar, a little thrown off his guard; "I was only getting up my steam."

"And so you are to tell the first?" went on Regi in a puzzled way, as if trying to tax his memory. "Surely I heard something about this, or else I may have dreamed it. It seems so natural; and yet it can't be that, you know. To tell you the truth, I'm glad of a chance to talk with some of you. Often, when I've been fooling around here in the afternoon, thinking about the long way you came to belong to us, and all, I've tried to make up things for you to say; but I wouldn't like the fellows at the gymnasium to hear it, because they'd call me 'girl baby,' and names like that. Well, old kettle, if you're to begin, there's no use waiting, so please steam ahead!"

"I must insist upon less familiarity!" said the Samovar, with a sniff of rising resentment. But one look at the little boy's expectant countenance, as he sat with clasped hands, leaning slightly forward, his soft, brown eyes fixed eagerly upon him, was sufficient to calm the speaker down into a gentle bubble of steady narrative.

"During the long winter months in Russia, my native country," said the Samovar, "our peasant folk live mostly within doors. There's not much temptation to go out when a perpetual snow lies upon ground as hard as iron, and the cold is so bitter you have to keep counting your ears and nose all the time to see if they are there! In the house where I lived there were a man, his wife, eight children and a grandfather; and although it was a tight fit in the matter of accommodation, those people enjoyed life after their own fashion. The common living-room was a dull place, with a huge stove in one corner, built of brick and whitewashed. On top of this stove was a broad shelf, forming the children's bed at night, where they were packed in and covered with sheep-skins. But I can remember some pleasant times those children had. Occasionally of an evening they would hold a Besyedy, a class for practising the useful arts.

"All their little neighbors were invited to be present; and, after the family meal of cabbage-soup and buckwheat porridge was consumed, the dishes washed and put away, the woman and her girls made haste to scrub the floors, tables and benches, till they were quite clean."

"How clean?" asked Regi, doubtfully.

"Well, there are many degrees of cleanliness," said the Samovar, tartly, "but I should say cleaner than your finger-nails are in general. Now, once for all, don't ask questions, or I shall certainly boil over with indignation.

"The next household act was to light a torch, in addition to the usual dim lamp that always burns before the image of the Virgin. Then all was in readiness; and about sunset the visitors came trooping in, hooded

and cowled, and clad in funny sheep-skin garments. Fresh wood was thrust into the gaping mouth of the stove, while an old woman, who acted as mistress of ceremonies, formed the children into a ring, giving each a task. Thus the girls learned to spin flax by the aid of quaint old-fashioned 'jennies,' and the boys plaited house-shoes of bark, stripped from the trees and dried in the summer sun. While work was fairly under way, songs were sung, and busy tongues kept time to busy fingers. The old woman who taught the class would trot around among the children, keeping order ; and, if they worked well, and provided she had no toothache, she would often tell them stories. Such stories as I have heard in that dear old smoke-stained hut ! Nothing anybody tells you can compare with them ! What would you say to witches and seven-headed snakes, horses with twelve wings and coats of silver, a king's daughter shut up in a garden hedged by seven fences made of bayonets, swan maidens, and princes who could leap glass mountains at a single bound ? Ah ! I can see your eyes sparkle, and no wonder. If I undertook to tell you all the tales I've heard at those Besyedys, my steam would give out before I got half way. There, I know you are dying to ask me a question ; and, to reward you for your self-control, I'll guess it. You want to hear one of my Russian stories ; a genuine folk-tale such as the peasant children love. Puff ! Puff ! Let me see. I think I can remember about the Prince, the Merman and Vasilissa the Wise. Ah ! I thought that would suit you, and here it is."

Once upon a time there lived a king and queen, and the king was very fond of hunting and shooting.

Well, one day he went out hunting and saw an eaglet sitting on an oak. Just as he was going to shoot it, the eaglet began to coax him.

"Please don't shoot me, king. Take me home, and see if some day I'm not of use to you."

The king thought about it, but he couldn't see what use an eaglet could ever be to a king. So again he took aim at the bird.

"Please don't shoot me, king. Take me home, and see if some day I'm not of use to you."

The king thought again, but he couldn't make up his mind what use an eaglet could ever be to a king. A third time he took aim.

"Please don't shoot me, king. Take me home, and see if some day I'm not of use to you."

The king's heart softened, and he took the bird home and fed it. Soon it grew strong and ate so much that every day it had to be supplied with a whole sheep or a cow. In two years the king had neither flocks nor cattle left. At last the eaglet cried, "Now set me free, good master, that I may try my wings."

The king set it free, and it tried to fly; but no, the wings flapped heavily down.

"Alas! king," cried the eaglet, with a sigh, "I've not had enough to eat yet. Feed me for another year, and you'll lose nothing by your kindness."

The king was puzzled, but he set to work borrowing sheep and cows from his neighbors, and so fed the eaglet for another year. At the end of that time he again set it free. Hurrah! this time the eagle soared proudly in the air; and then, coming back, invited the king to take a ride upon his back. The king accepted his invitation, and in a moment they were high above the clouds, speeding past the region of the stars into a

land where lived the eagle's family. They visited the eagle's mother and his sisters, who received the king politely, thanking him for his kindness to their boy.

"Now, my king," said the eagle, in a friendly way, "stay a while with me, and afterward I'll give you a ship, and some other presents to repay you for all I ate at your house ; then—God speed you home again."

When the time came, the eagle flew down with the king to the seashore ; and there they found a fine large ship. On the deck were two chests ; one red, the other green.

"Mind, king," said the eagle, in bidding his guest good-by, "you must on no account open the coffers till you get home. Then open the red chest in your field, the green chest in your garden."

The king sailed away over the blue sea till he came to a pleasant island, where he took the red chest ashore, and began wondering what was in it.

"What difference can it make ? I'll just have a peep," he said ; but no sooner had he lifted the lid, than out poked a cold wet nose, followed by a pair of horns. Then another and another, till there escaped from the chest such a great number of different kinds of cattle, the island was half full of them in a minute. This made the king feel very sorrowful, for he knew there was no chance of his getting this vast multitude again into so small a space. As he sat there lamenting, there came up out of the sea a Merman, who asked him what the trouble was. The king explained, and the Merman promised to help him, on condition that the king should give him whatever he had at home that he knew nothing about.

"Whatever I have at home that I know nothing about," repeated the king. "That seems easy enough,

for I fancy I know pretty much all that's there. All right old man. It's a bargain, so set to work."

The Merman blew a shell whistle, and in ten minutes all the cattle had come running up and been stowed within the red chest again.

The king made haste to get his chest aboard ship, and to sail away. When he reached home, what was his joy to hear that during his absence the queen had had a most beautiful little boy. But then the poor king remembered his promise to the Merman, and turned pale. Tears rushed from his eyes when he kissed his baby. To seek distraction from these thoughts, he took his red coffer out into the fields, and, opening it, set free the splendid herd of cattle, which immediately went to grazing peacefully upon his tall grasses. Carrying the green chest into the garden, he next opened that, when, behold! there were trees, and plants, and flowers of marvellous beauty such as he had never seen, which, flying from the chest, took root in his soil, making it the most glorious garden in the world. The king forgot his fatal promise, and thought only of enjoying his happy home. Years passed, and one day he was crossing a river when out popped the angry old Merman.

"A pretty king you are, not to keep a promise. Bring me my prize before a day is past."

The poor king went home full of misery, to tell his queen the bad news. They decided that the prince must go; so they took him to the river bank, and left him. While the poor prince stood waiting for his new master to come and fetch him, up came a Baba Yaga, a regular witch of the woods.

"Pray, granny, help me a bit in my trouble," said the prince, pleasantly.

She knew all about it without waiting to be told—a

faculty which certainly saves a great deal of wasted breath in this world ; and she said : "Well, I like your looks, and I'll help you ; wait here till sunset, and you will see twelve swans fly down, take off their plumage, and go into the water to bathe. Do you steal quietly up and lay hands upon the largest swan's plumage. It belongs to the Merman's daughter, and when once you have got it, she will have to promise you what you ask, to get it back again."

The prince obeyed, and hid behind the bushes. Soon all happened as the Baba Yaga said. The swans, diving into the water, turned into twelve lovely maidens. When they had done bathing, they came out swans again, and each put on her rightful plumage ; but the eldest one sought in vain for hers. Who should she be but Vasilissa the Wise, the Merman's eldest daughter. Then the prince spoke to her from behind the bushes.

"I hold your plumage, fair Swan-lady," he said. "What will you give me if I return it to you?"

"I'll help you more than you can imagine," she replied. "I know they are expecting you at my father's house, and will make a slave of you. But never mind. Give me my plumage, and I will lend you my best three servants to attend you."

So the prince gave her the plumage, and at once she put on her swan's coat and flew away. Out of the wood came three odd-looking fellows, who addressed him as their master. The prince asked their names, and learned that they were called "The Mighty Eater," "The Mighty Drinker," and "Freeze-em-out," respectively.

"You must be rather an expensive lot to keep," he said; "however, hurry up now, and take me to the Merman's palace."

"I hold your plumage, fair Swan-Lady," he said; "what will you give me if I return it to you?"

When they reached the palace the Merman was growling furiously.

"You've taken your time to come to me," he said. "Here, set to work at once. Your first task is to build me, in one night, a great crystal bridge, that the whole court may pass over on the morrow. If you don't build it—why—off goes your head—that's all!"

The prince went out into the garden and burst into tears. Vasilissa the Wise, combing her golden locks at an upper chamber window of the palace, saw him and cried out, "What ails you, prince? Tell me your trouble."

"Ah, Vasilissa," said the prince, "your father means to murder me, it is clear. How can I ever build, in a single night, a crystal bridge over which the whole court may pass upon the morrow?"

"Bah! is that all?" said Vasilissa the Wise. "Lie down and sleep on it. Remember the morning is wiser than the evening!"

The prince obeyed her, and at midnight out rushed Vasilissa from her chamber, and stood on the river bank. She uttered a mighty whistling cry; from all sides there came running artists and workmen fetching tools and bricks of glass. In the twinkling of an eye arose a beautiful crystal arch, graven with strange devices; and the workers went away as fast as they had come.

Early next morning Vasilissa the Wise awoke the prince. "Get up, prince. The bridge is ready, and my father will soon be coming to inspect it."

Up jumped the prince, full of joy, and, taking a broom in his hand, pretended to be sweeping the bridge as if he had just finished it.

Soon came along the angry Merman.

"What's this!" he said, in surprise. "Well, you are good for more than I thought, assuredly. Now for your second task. Plant me by to-morrow a garden green—a big and shady one. There must be birds singing in the branches, rare flowers blossoming in the borders, and from every bough must hang ripe luscious fruit."

Again the prince went off to Vasilissa, telling her his woes.

"Pooh! That's nothing. Lie down and sleep. Don't you know the morning is wiser than the evening?" said she.

The prince lay down and slept. At midnight, Vasilissa the Wise rushed out from her chamber and stood on the river bank. She uttered a mighty whistling cry, and from all parts there ran gardeners and laborers, who carried plants and seeds and blooming flowers. In the twinkling of an eye they had made a beautiful garden, where birds of gay plumage sang upon the branches, brilliant flowers sprung up in the borders, and luscious fruits hung upon every bough.

Early in the morning Vasilissa the Wise awoke the prince. "Get up, prince. The garden is ready. My father is coming out to inspect it."

The prince ran into the garden, and, picking up a broom, swept the paths neatly.

Soon came along the astonished Merman.

"Better and better!" cried he. "Here, my good youth, you have done me right good service and deserve a rich reward. Go, choose yourself a bride among my twelve daughters. They are all exactly alike in face, in hair and in dress. If you can pick out the same one three times running, she shall be your wife; if you fail, off goes your head!"

"Never mind," whispered Vasilissa the Wise; "if I be the one you would choose, the first time I shall wave my handkerchief, the second time I shall be arranging my dress, the third time you will see a fly above my forehead."

Thus it was that the prince contrived to guess Vasilissa the Wise three times running. There was nothing for the old Merman but to submit, so the wedding came off in fine style. The feast prepared for the young couple was more than a hundred men could eat.

"I wish you a good appetite, son-in-law," said the Merman, with a malicious grin. "Eat all you want, but if anything remains over, off goes your head!" And with that he departed, leaving them alone.

"Call for the Mighty Eater," whispered the bride to her husband. In came the prince's servant, and, when they ordered him to help himself, the victuals vanished like smoke. When the dishes were empty, the Mighty Eater looked anxiously about for more, as he went away.

Returning presently, the Merman set out about forty tubs of strong drinks of every kind, ordering his son-in-law to drain every one of them dry, on pain of losing his head. And with that he departed again, leaving them alone.

"Call now for the Mighty Drinker," whispered Vasilissa the Wise. In came the Mighty Drinker, and, in a flash, every tub was emptied to the dregs. But when the Merman came back again and found this out, he fell into a spiteful rage.

"My son-in-law must need a hot bath," he said to his servants. "Heat the bath-room, until it is red-hot; do you hear?"

And the iron bath-room was made so hot that you

could not come within ten feet of it. Twelve loads of firewood were poked into the stove.

"Call for Freeze-em-out, and send him into the bath-room first," whispered Vasilissa the Wise to her husband.

This was done; and, when Freeze-em-out had opened his mouth and blown a single blast into that burning heat, in a moment the air became bitterly cold, and icicles were hanging on the bath-room stove, while you might have skated on the floor, which was a shining sheet of ice.

By this time Vasilissa the Wise made up her mind that it was best to take her young husband away, out of her wicked father's power. So the two saddled their horses and galloped off into the open plain. They rode and rode, and many an hour went by.

"Jump down, dear prince, and lay your ear to the ground," said Vasilissa; "and tell me if you hear any one pursuing us?"

The prince did as he was bid, but he could hear nothing. Then Vasilissa herself got down from her good steed, and laid her ear to the ground.

"Ah! I hear them," she cried; "a great multitude is after us."

So, quick as thought, she changed the two horses into a well, herself into the well-bucket, and the prince into a very old man leaning on a staff.

Up came the pursuers. "Halloo, old man!" cried they, "have you seen a youth and a maiden pass by here on horseback?"

"I think I did see somebody like that, a long time ago," the old man said; "but I was a young man then."

So the pursuers turned back, and reported to the Merman that they had seen nobody but an old man,

leaning on his staff, beside a well with a bucket floating in the water.

"Why didn't you seize him, you fools?" cried the Merman; and, forthwith putting the pursuers to a cruel death, he sent another troop in search of the prince and Vasilissa the Wise.

Meantime the fugitives had ridden far, far away. Vasilissa heard the noise made by the new set of pursuers; so she turned the horses into two trees, herself into an old moss-grown church, and the prince into an old priest standing in front of it.

Up came the pursuers. "Halloo, old man! Have you seen a youth and a maiden riding by this way?"

"I think I did see such a couple once," said the old man; "but it was long, long ago, when we were building this very church."

Back rode the second set of pursuers to the Merman, saying: "There is neither trace nor news of them, your Royal Majesty. All we saw was an old church between two trees, and an ancient priest standing in front of it."

"Why didn't you seize him, rascals?" cried the furious Merman. Then these poor wretches, too, were put to death; and the Merman himself galloped off in pursuit.

Vasilissa heard him coming, and quickly changed the horses into a river of honey with banks of amber jelly, the prince into a snow-white drake, and herself into a silver-gray duck. When the Merman got to the river he began tasting it greedily, and then he ate some of the bank; and so he ate and ate until he burst and died.

When Vasilissa saw that her father was really dead, she cried; but the prince wiped her eyes, and told her

that he would always love her tenderly. So they galloped off again, and rode straight to the palace of the king and queen, who were still bitterly lamenting the supposed loss of their darling son and heir.

The prince presented to them Vasilissa the Wise, and great was their joy to find that their son was alive and well, and had won for himself a beautiful and clever bride.

Vasilissa and the prince went on a wedding journey to visit the friendly eagle, who made them many splendid presents, and, after they reached home again, came every year to see them.

"That was *dandy!*" cried Regi, eagerly; "especially the jelly, and the ducks! I hope those funny servants, Freeze-em-out and the rest, came to live with Vasilissa and the prince. Say, old Kettle; did they?"

But the Samovar had ceased to simmer, and answered him not a word.

"I don't think anybody would believe this, if I told it," reflected Regi. "Not even Fred or Rosa. Chickabiddy might, but I'm not likely to see her soon. One thing is certain, I'm coming in here every chance I get, to listen if anything else speaks to me."

THE STORY OF THE THREE SILVER FEATHERS.

In a velvet box on the cabinet-shelf, was a quaint silver brooch formed in the shape of three feathers, set with transparent stones of the color of sherry wine, and inscribed below with the words "Ich Dien," which Regi's papa had told him is the motto of the Prince of Wales, meaning "I serve."

"I don't know much about Wales," Regi said to himself, while fingering this brooch, in his boy's fashion, the next afternoon. "On my map it's only a queer little purple country sticking on to England's back; and it has two rabbit's ears—a Welsh rabbit's, I suppose! I wonder if it would be worth while to ask *you* to tell me my story for to-day."

"Your ignorance protects you, little boy," answered the silver brooch, calmly. "I am too old and dignified to take offence at trifles. I prefer to enjoy the quiet of the afternoon of life. So it will suffice to answer you, that my dear little picturesque country is the very cradle of romantic legend in Europe. Fairy tales, especially, are the small coin of our current speech."

"What's that?" said Regi, sharply.

"Perhaps I am talking of my day," went on the brooch, not deigning to explain herself. "And that

was some time since. As the poet Dryden has beautifully observed—

'I speak of ancient times, for now the swain
Returning late may pass the woods in vain,
And never hope to see the nightly train.'"

"What is the nightly train?" Regi interrupted, dimly following. "Fairies, do you mean? Oh! if there's anything I love, it's a real fairy tale. But, if you won't think me very impolite, I can't understand the very longest words, only the middling long words. And I am sure Wales is a very interesting country."

"I shall try to adapt myself to your comprehension," said the pacified brooch. "For my own part, I was born and bred in a town; but the lady who owned me first, used to go in summer time to the quiet country nooks where tradition likes to linger. My mistress was passionately fond of collecting the local stories, wherever she might be; and so it was I picked up many a delightful tale of ancient times in Wales. The one I shall tell you, you may call 'Taffy and the Little Folk in Green.'"

Not far from Cardigan, in Wales, stands a mountain, called Frennifawr; and in that neighborhood once lived an honest shoemaker who had an only son named Taffy. Do what he might, the shoemaker could not induce Taffy to follow his father's trade. The lad would sit down on the bench, awl in hand, and begin to cobble, when suddenly his eyes would be diverted from his work by a butterfly flying in at the open door of the cottage, or would spy out the birds in the

boughs of an old tree that sheltered their home, or remain fascinated by the passing of the clouds upon the distant mountain top. His father's angry voice, rousing Taffy from his reverie, filled him with a sense of shame, and he would set to work again diligently, to be distracted as before by the first object in nature that chanced to catch his wandering attention. The shoemaker was a testy fellow, having little patience with what he called the moonstruck gentry who expected other people to provide their bread and cheese, while they twirled thumbs for a living. He attributed his son's idleness to a school-teacher who had spent a summer or two among their hills, engaging Taffy to be his guide about the neighborhood, and teaching the lad no end of nonsense about chipping off bits of rocks, tearing to pieces flowers and plants, collecting birds' eggs, fungi, and the like. How was such stuff as that to put pence into a man's pocket? the cobbler would like to know. So Taffy got many a hard word and many a beating; but still he sat on his bench by the open door, and, when forbidden to look about, listened to the melodies of nature; the rush of a far away river tumbling adown its rocky bed; the liquid note of a bird's song; the sheep-bells tinkling on the hills; the summer wind rustling among the forest leaves! And when, after supper, an hour was given him for himself, with what alacrity the boy straightened out his long, stiff legs and disappeared in the direction of the uplands, to come back in the star-light, his hair and his clothes wet with dew, but having on his face a happy, dreamy look that none understood, or perhaps noticed.

The truth is that Taffy was possessed to hunt for fairies. His brain was haunted with legends of the little green folk, with which that part of the country

teemed ; and, week in week out, the lad wondered how he could get a peep at the fairy doings he was certain went on in the neighborhood. During his rambles with his school-master, a year or two back, Taffy had been induced to open his store of ancient legends and superstitions for the scholar's entertainment, and great was his delight to find not only a sympathetic spirit, but a fellow believer in these enchanting mysteries. The school-master knew many tales that Taffy had never heard ; and together they discoursed about fairy-rings and wishing-wells, cromlechs and devil's altars, hidden treasures and magic fountains, the achievements of by-gone Saints and the adventures of daring peasants. One day, while sitting upon a green bank by the side of a brawling stream to eat his mid-day meal of bread and cheese, the school-master spied, in the palm of Taffy's hand, a birth-mark like a tiny coal of fire.

"You are a favored man, Taffy, did you but know it," he said. "This mark betokens the fact that you received a visit, while in your cradle, from one of the wee folk, and that you are destined, some time during your life, to take one of them by the hand. Only keep a sharp look-out, while you explore, and my word for it you will have a glorious opportunity."

The school-master had long since gone away from their neighborhood, but Taffy remembered this, and many another of his sayings. He loathed his father's trade, thinking how much easier it would be to make a fortune by upsetting a rocking-stone, for instance, and finding underneath a pot of jewels, or, by digging at the bottom of a cromlech, to come upon a pouch of fairy gold. To accomplish this, he needed only the good will of the green people ; and, by way of propiti-

ating them, Taffy fell upon a number of quaint devices. He would make moss-baskets and fill them with ripe berries, to set near the edge of a suspected copse ; or leave a wooden bowl of goats' milk, and a cake of white bread, on the margin of a running stream. Sometimes, when he could ask pay from the farmers' wives for a hand's turn of work done in their busy seasons, Taffy took it in the shape of a cream cheese, or a pat of fresh butter, or a couple of pearly eggs, which he would hasten to deposit in the root of an old tree in his favorite haunt, going hungry himself, that the wee people might approve of him. What strengthened his belief, was that the bowls or platters he took there were always found again, empty and scoured clean and white as snow, with a silver penny in the bottom ; but, alas ! this was all. Not a sign or token could Taffy secure of their visible presence, though he knew the fairies no longer shunned him. He could have sworn that he heard their wings clashing in the thickets of an evening, and more than once a peal of elfin laughter reached his ear.

Matters grew worse and worse in the cobbler's home. One day, Taffy was told he must go without his supper until he had put a patch on the minister's Sunday shoe, as it was then late Saturday evening, and the cobbler himself had to go to the village upon important business. Having locked up all the food there was in the cupboard, the cobbler departed, scolding Taffy as far as he could be heard. Taffy stitched away with dogged resolution, as it was beautiful spring weather, and he longed for nothing so much as freedom to go on a tramp through his beloved woods. But every thing went wrong ; his thread and awl broke, and, do what he could, his stitches failed. The minister's patch threatened never to be affixed to the well-

worn shoe. Taffy dropped his tools, and, between hunger and disappointment, felt ready to cry. At this critical moment he felt a pricking sensation in the fiery mark in the palm of his hand. Immediately, a tiny being hopped from under the leather scraps at his feet, and, placing his arms akimbo, laughed a goblin laugh in the astonished Taffy's face.

He was the queerest little creature one ever saw. His merry face, puckered up into a thousand wrinkles, was lighted by a pair of eyes that shone with the green light of fire-flies. His hair stood on end, and his whole body was perpetually in motion, wavering like the shadow of a leaf.

"Now, my lad!" said the elf, to Taffy, "As I've had my sport out of you, it's but fair you should be rewarded. I came here to-night to do you a good turn, in recognition of the services you've done our band from time to time, especially the kind act of yesterday, when you lifted a fallen branch that was crushing our queen's favorite patch of blue star-flowers, in the wood."

"I ask only one thing. Let me see your band and your queen," stammered Taffy, overpowered now that the long-looked-for moment had come. "Oh! Mr. Fairy, if you knew how I have longed to see a revel."

"Pooh! Nonsense!" exclaimed the elf. "You don't know what you're asking, lad. Be satisfied with this purse of silver pennies our queen has sent to you; and let me mend that shoe, or the good man will have to go barefoot to service to-morrow."

Taffy took the pence and held his breath, while the little creature went to work, and, in a moment, had the great patch neatly in its place. Then, when the elf tapped the cupboard lock, open it flew, and Taffy found upon the shelves bread and meat, and ale of the very

"Immediately a tiny being hopped from under the leather scraps at his feet, and placing his arms akimbo, laughed a goblin laugh in the astonished Taffy's face."

best. The elf joined him at supper, talking merrily the while, but Taffy durst not ask him any of the questions that were brimming to his lips. When the meal was over, the little man bade his companion good-night, and, before the boy's eyes could wink, flew away out of the open door.

Without stopping to think, Taffy dropped the purse, and ran after him. Helter-skelter, up hill and down dale, his long legs carried the cobbler's son in pursuit of the tiny flitting thing he was resolved not to lose from his sight. What a wild chase that was—through thorn-patch and heather, through marshy field, and up rocky hillside—Taffy coursing swift as a hare, the elf's luminous green body serving as a light to his pursuer's path. Now they went down into a dark valley, where the frogs and the lizards, the night-birds, and the crawling creatures that infest a swamp, looked after them in surprise. Now they scaled a steep mountain wall, where snakes glided away from the path, and wild animals crouched down till they had passed. Taffy, forgetting fear, continued to run, till at length the dancing green light in front of him stood still, at which he, too, stopped to take breath. Perspiration streamed from his body, his heart thumped against his ribs, and his tongue was dry and parched.

"Ho! Ho! Ho!" laughed the elf, still keeping a safe distance. "I've given you a pretty run, for your pains, Master Taffy. Stoop and quench your thirst at the rivulet you hear trickling through the stones beside you, before you try to answer; and then tell me what you expect to gain by following me."

Taffy not only drank, but bathed his head and hands in the sparkling water; and, feeling much refreshed, spoke cheerfully.

"I have asked you once," he said; "and if I were to live a thousand years, it would be the same request. I desire above everything to see your wee folk at their revels."

"Since you are so determined," answered the elf, "I will give you a chance. If you had not kept up with me in the hunt without once falling down, however, I can tell you there'd have been no hope for you. As it is, I warn you that you are doing the silliest thing you could possibly think of; and you are sure to repent it. Follow me, at a quieter pace this time, and when we reach a mill where there is an ancient logan (rocking) stone, hide behind the bushes and watch me summon an old woman who will counsel us. Obey her directions, and you will have your wish."

They proceeded to a hill on top of which stood a great stone inscribed with mystic characters, that Taffy well remembered. He knew then that he was miles away from his own home, in a wild and desolate portion of the country, which he had visited only once before, in company with the schoolmaster. The logan stone, although of a huge size, (said to have been thrown there in old days by a giant standing on the Irish coast), was so nicely balanced that a child could set it in motion with a touch. The elf, who, by this time Taffy decided, could be none other than the famous will-o'-the-wisp fairy, Pcwa, brushed against it with his wing, and the great mass began vibrating. The spot in Taffy's palm began to itch, and presently there came out from under the stone a little old woman, wearing a blue petticoat, a scarlet jacket, and a high-crowned yellow hat.

"What would you, idle Pcwa?" she asked, angrily; "always at your tricks, I'll warrant."

"I have been on a mission for the queen, mother," said Pcwa, who was the old woman's favorite son; "and now, as you want me to know all of fairy lore, I've come to ask what a mortal must do who would look upon our revels."

"Have you such a grudge against any mortal?" cried the old woman, reprovingly; "off with you Pcwa, and try to be less mischievous. Be content to lead the foolish creatures astray, to trip their feet and bump their heads; and beware how you permit any poor wretch to risk his life in the way you propose."

"But, at least, you'll tell me how it might be done, mammy," said Pcwa coaxingly. "It is the only bit of fairy knowledge I'm ignorant of; and yester e'en the others taunted me, because my education will never be finished, they say."

"Did they so?" exclaimed the fairy, stamping her foot; "then remember this, to stop their saucy mouths with, my own boy. Only he who has had a fairy's kiss in his cradle, leaving a red mark like a coal of fire upon his flesh, can see us without being instantly struck blind. If the mortal who wishes to behold us has been thus favored by our race, let him stand under the yew-tree in the middle of the oak forest at midnight. If a fog arises, cutting the forest off from the rest of the world, he may see the dance occur, and may live after looking at it. But should he rashly set one foot into our ring, he will belong to us, to do our pleasure or to receive our punishment."

"That's better than I thought," exclaimed Pcwa, winking at Taffy hidden behind the bushes. Thanking the old fairy, her son waited till she had gone under the stone again, before setting forth with his comrade in the direction of the oak forest. Taffy's heart now

beat high with anticipation, as he followed Pcwa, who, obliging though he had become, could not refrain from playing a variety of frolicsome tricks upon the cobbler's son, leading him a lively dance before they reached the great yew-tree in the centre of the forest.

It was now well on to midnight, and the moon shone brilliantly, silvering the forest glens and making each blade of grass or stem of flower appear in unearthly beauty. As Taffy took his stand behind the yew-tree bole a strange wind blew, a white mist arose, surrounding the spot on which he stood, and leaving but a verdant circle exposed, directly at his feet. Pcwa vanished, and Taffy's palm began to itch. Then arrived a little man in moss breeches, with a fiddle under his arm. He was the tiniest specimen of humanity imaginable. His coat was made of birch-leaves, his feet were shod in slippers of beetles' wings; and, for a hat, he jauntily sported a reversed flower of the gorse. Perching upon a stump, the little fiddler drew his bow over his instrument, and Taffy's hair stood on end at the sweetness of the sound. And now the itching of his palm increased to a violent degree, so that he felt like crying out. But he restrained the impulse, and, at once, from all parts of the forest, came trooping little people, the women dressed in blue and white and rose color, with cobweb scarfs and dewdrop diadems, and the men in coats of dragon-fly wings, with flower hats. All, bearing in their hands glowworm torches, tripped so lightly, that the finest spear of moss did not bend beneath their weight. Such exquisite beauty and grace was never dreamed of! When they formed into figures for the dance, bowing and curtseying to each other, and the fiddler struck up a fairy measure, Taffy felt as as if an electric current of purest bliss had passed into

his blood. His head reeled, and he had to cling with both arms to the tree to keep his footing. As the dance went on, he became more and more excited—until, completely forgetting himself and the cautions he had received, the foolish boy kicked off his heavy country shoes, and bounced into the middle of the ring!

"Play away, old fellow," he shouted, tossing his cap into the air, and seizing the prettiest fairy by the hand; "I'm for a dance once, if I have to die for it."

Taffy fell to capering, about as gracefully as a donkey would, while peal after peal of shrill mocking laughter rang through the air. Then, surrounding him, a number of the fairies swarmed and stung like bees; others pinched his calves black and blue; others tickled him under the arms until he shrieked for mercy. Going down upon his knees in the magic circle, he saw that, instead of the gorse-blossom cap on the fiddler's head, a pair of goat's horns sprouted, while the musician's face had turned as black as soot, and cloven feet replaced the jaunty pumps. Some of the fairies became foxes, some goats, some dogs, some cats. They whirled about him like a nightmare, shouting and laughing discordantly, and increasing their speed till their ring resembled a wheel of fire. At this point, Taffy lost consciousness, and fell senseless on the ground.

When our hero came to himself, he was standing upon a hillside looking over toward Frennifawr, around whose summit transparent ribbons of mist were twining in the light of the rising sun. The scene beneath and around him was one of surpassing freshness and beauty, and the air was sweet with the perfume of the gorse. Sheep wandered near him, tinkling their bells; and everything breathed peace to his bewildered spirit.

Trying to recall what had befallen him, Taffy sought a path leading in the direction of his home.

"I shall get a strapping for this," he said; "but it was worth it."

His limbs felt strangely stiff, and he could with difficulty stand upright.

"No wonder, since I lay on the damp ground all night long," he reflected, hobbling onward. But, when he had crossed the hillock dividing him from his father's valley, Taffy saw, to his extreme surprise, that, instead of the tumble-down cottage of his former home, a fine stone farm-house had arisen, surrounded by comfortable out-buildings, yards and stacks.

"This is some fairy trick," he said, stopping short. "It was only last night that I left home, and in that short time they have built my father a new house. Well, I only hope it's real. Perhaps 't will vanish at a breath, as their fine clothes did, last night. Anyhow, I'll soon satisfy myself about it."

He hastened down the steep path, to cross into the rear of what was once the cottage garden. The first thing he did there was to run into a stout hedge of some prickly shrub, that must have taken years to attain its present growth. Taffy rubbed his eyes, scratched his head, felt the hedge again, and, running a sharp thorn into his finger, clapped the finger into his mouth, exclaiming:

"Whew! these are real thorns, and no mistake. How, in the name of wonder, did they grow in so short a time? I'll be blest if I am not losing my wits."

He managed to scramble over the hedge, and found himself in a well-kept barn-yard, where a strange, fierce dog came bounding toward him, barking furiously.

"Down, sir! Down! you ill-mannered brute! whose

dog are you ?" cried Taffy. "Well! if I had not been born and bred here, I should think I was in somebody else's place."

The dog barked louder than ever.

"Surely, I've wandered astray," said confused Taffy. "But no! there is the mountain top, and all the old landmarks are the same."

While he was gazing over at the misty mountain summit, a man came out of the house to see why the dog barked so angrily. Poor Taffy stood there ragged and forlorn, and the good man's heart was touched.

"Where do you come from, and who are you?" he asked, in no unfriendly tone. Taffy looked into his face appealingly.

"I know who I was," he answered, sadly; "but who I am now, I begin to doubt. I was Taffy, the son of Sion the shoemaker, whose cottage stood on this very spot only yesterday; and I came from the forest where I have spent the night. Much as the place has changed, the mountain yonder, and the rocks and woods about it, have not altered."

"Why, man!" cried the farmer, "you have surely lost your wits! The main part of the house here was built by my great-grandfather, and repaired by my grandfather. I added the wing about three years ago; but the farm has been in our possession time out of mind. He seems to be a harmless fellow," the master added, to his wife, who now drew near. "But it is quite evident that he is deranged. Let us give him food and drink, and allow him to rest inside."

Still Taffy lingered, and looked about him. "It was but yesterday that daddy punished me for robbing the hawk's nest in that tree over there, and bade me set to work at the patch on the minister's shoe," he exclaimed,

persistently ; " I could take oath that it was but yesterday."

The farmer and his wife looked at each other, and shook their heads. They said no more, convinced as they were of the wanderer's insanity ; but led him within doors, giving him food and a fire-side corner.

By the time evening came, Taffy, refreshed and strengthened, asked the farmer if he had never heard of Sion Evan y Crydd o Glanrhyd (the cobbler's full name). " I never heard of such a person in this village," said the man ; " but do you try to remember what you have been doing since you left here 'yesterday,' as you say."

" I am almost afraid you will not believe it," answered Taffy, "but what I am going to tell you is as true as that I am here talking to you."

So he recounted every item of his adventures to the farmer and his wife, from the moment when the elfin visitor appeared to him from the pile of leather cuttings, to that when he had fallen dizzy and senseless, in the middle of the fairy ring.

The farmer listened as if uncertain whether or not to credit him; but the good wife, whose head, like Taffy's own, was stuffed in every chink and crevice with fairy lore, followed his tale with breathless interest.

"It is no wonder he is dazed," she said, devoutly. "Poor boy! poor boy! See, husband, his clothes are of such a pattern as we have never seen, here ; though his face is still young and fair. Let us all three hasten to the hut of old Catti Shon, the oldest crone in the village, who preserves every tale and legend of the past in memory. Perhaps she may throw some light upon this poor lad's history."

The suggestion adopted, the three walked to old

Catti's house. They found her in appearance so ancient and feeble that she seemed nothing but a bag of rattling bones, crouching over a pile of faggots.

"How do you do, the day, Mother Catti?" asked the man, kindly.

"Wonderful well, farmer, wonderful well," mumbled the crone, "considering my years."

"Yes, Catti, you are very old, and it's for that reason we've come to ask if you remember ever hearing anything about a cobbler named Sion y Crydd o Glanrhyd, in these parts long ago. Was there ever such a man here?"

"Sion Glanrhyd," repeated Catti. "Well, it does seem to me I remember my grandfather, old Evan Shenkin, telling a queer story about Sion the shoemaker. Surely he was father to the boy that had the fairy mark in the palm of his left hand. 'Queer Taffy,' the village children called him. One night Taffy disappeared from home, leaving a purse of silver on his working-bench, and never was heard of more. They said the fairies got him. His father's cot stood about where your house does now; eh! but it's long ago——"

"Have there been fairies seen here in your day, Catti?" asked the farmer's wife, breathlessly.

"Oh! yes. Yonder hill was a famous place for them; and in old times they used to steal eggs and milk from the barn yards and dairies near, to make the flummery they'd eat at their festivals, out of egg-shell cups. Many's the ring I've seen stamped out on the green-sward, the morning after their dances. Strange, you should have asked me about old Sion. Just this morning I was thinking over the way his son got that fairy mark. Some said 'twas a good fairy's kiss given

him in the cradle, others declared it was a spiteful fairy's bite."

While Catti was mumbling out these sentences in her disjointed way, Taffy was listening with all his ears. When they went out of the crone's hut, he silently extended his left hand for the inspection of his new found friends. There, in the centre, glowed a mark like a coal of fire.

"Poor lad! poor lad!" repeated the farmer's wife. "Husband, we will give him a place at our board, and he can work about the farm."

The farmer assented, though in his heart he felt uncomfortable about the whole business, which seemed to him uncanny.

"Come on; hurry home. The day is closing, and the milking is yet to be done," he said, starting off with his wife to walk at a brisk pace in the direction of their house.

The path was narrow, and Taffy followed them. Presently the good couple, hearing the sound of his footsteps grow weaker and weaker, turned round, when, to their dismay, they saw the poor fellow fall and crumble instantly into a handful of black ashes at their feet. In the midst of these ashes shone a single spark, but that was soon extinct.

To this day, the grandchildren of that farmer and his wife tell the woful tale of poor Taffy to their gossips.

"Why did he fall to ashes?" cried Regi, full of sympathy; "and how long did the fairies keep him, really?"

"He was bewitched," said the three feathers. "This

was his punishment, after a century and a half of imprisonment; I suppose it was for daring to take a fairy by the hand."

"I like all but the ending," the little boy observed. "Taffy was the nicest sort of a fellow, I think; and it was too mean to finish it that way. It nearly spoiled the story."

"Well, that was the way some people ended it," answered the brooch. "Others declared that Taffy, though never able to do much work, lived to a green old age in the farmer's family. They said that the good wife, who had at least a dozen children, was always quite satisfied when she knew they were in Taffy's charge, clinging around his neck, swarming on his knees, begging for fairy-tales as eagerly as you do; and that his own story, never more than half credited in the country-side, was told to these admirers so often that it was worn quite threadbare."

"That's good! That's good!" cried the boy clapping his hands. "That's *my* ending. But which do you believe in, three feathers?"

"As to believing," answered the brooch, "it's neither here nor there. You had better not ask that question until the Christmas holidays are over."

THE STORY OF THE ARABIAN PIPE.

"I AM now at your disposal, friend," said, next day, a pipe of Eastern workmanship, richly decorated with gold and silken tassels, having a mouth-piece of carved amber.

Regi dropped into a chair, and the pipe forthwith began:

Once there lived a merchant who had a wife and three sons, Salim, Selim and Joodar. Joodar, the youngest, was of an affectionate and thoughtful disposition, and when the father died, leaving his property to be divided in equal portions among the four survivors, it was an easy matter for the two wicked elder brothers to wheedle Joodar's share and that belonging to their mother, into their own keeping. Before a year had passed, Salim and Selim had spent most of their own money in riotous living; and they then determined to take the rest and go off with it into a distant country, where they might enjoy their ill-gotten gains undisturbed. Accordingly, one night they disappeared, leaving their mother and Joodar penniless. After the first burst of grief and shame was spent, Joodar comforted his mother, telling her that he was strong and young, and could make enough to keep them both. Not knowing any other way to earn a living, he bought a fishing-net, and went out to cast it

into the desolate lake of Karoon, of which, as it was said to be haunted, all other fishermen were afraid.

This lake was surrounded by frowning hills, and its waters were black as ink. Joodar was about to cast his net, when up rode a solitary traveller, a Moor to all appearance, mounted upon a richly caparisoned mule.

"Do my bidding, Joodar, son of Omar," the newcomer said, to his surprise, "and whatever may happen to *me*, nothing but good can come to you from it."

"I am at your service, my lord," answered the fisherman, politely.

"Then bind my hands tightly with this silken cord; throw me into the water; watch patiently until either my hands or my feet appear on the surface. If it be my hands, cast in quickly and drag me ashore. If it be my feet, be assured that I have perished, and make no attempt to save me. If I perish, take my mule and saddle-bags to Shumeyah, the Jew, who lives at the end of your street, and he will pay you a hundred pieces of gold for your trouble."

Joodar bowed, in token of obedience; and immediately the Moor sprang into the dark waters, and was lost to sight. Anxiously did the fisherman stand upon the shore, prepared to cast his net. But in a short time the feet of the unfortunate stranger appeared on the surface, and then sank forever into the abyss. Slowly and mournfully did Joodar drive the mule to the house of Shumeyah the Jew, who seemed not surprised to see him, but told out to him in silence the promised pieces of gold.

Joodar made haste to buy food and firewood for his mother, and they enjoyed a good hot supper. Concealing his gold in the house, he was tempted next day to revisit with his net, the same mysterious lake. Did

his eyes deceive him? There, upon the bank, sat another Moor, exactly resembling the first, with mule, saddle-bags, and accoutrements complete.

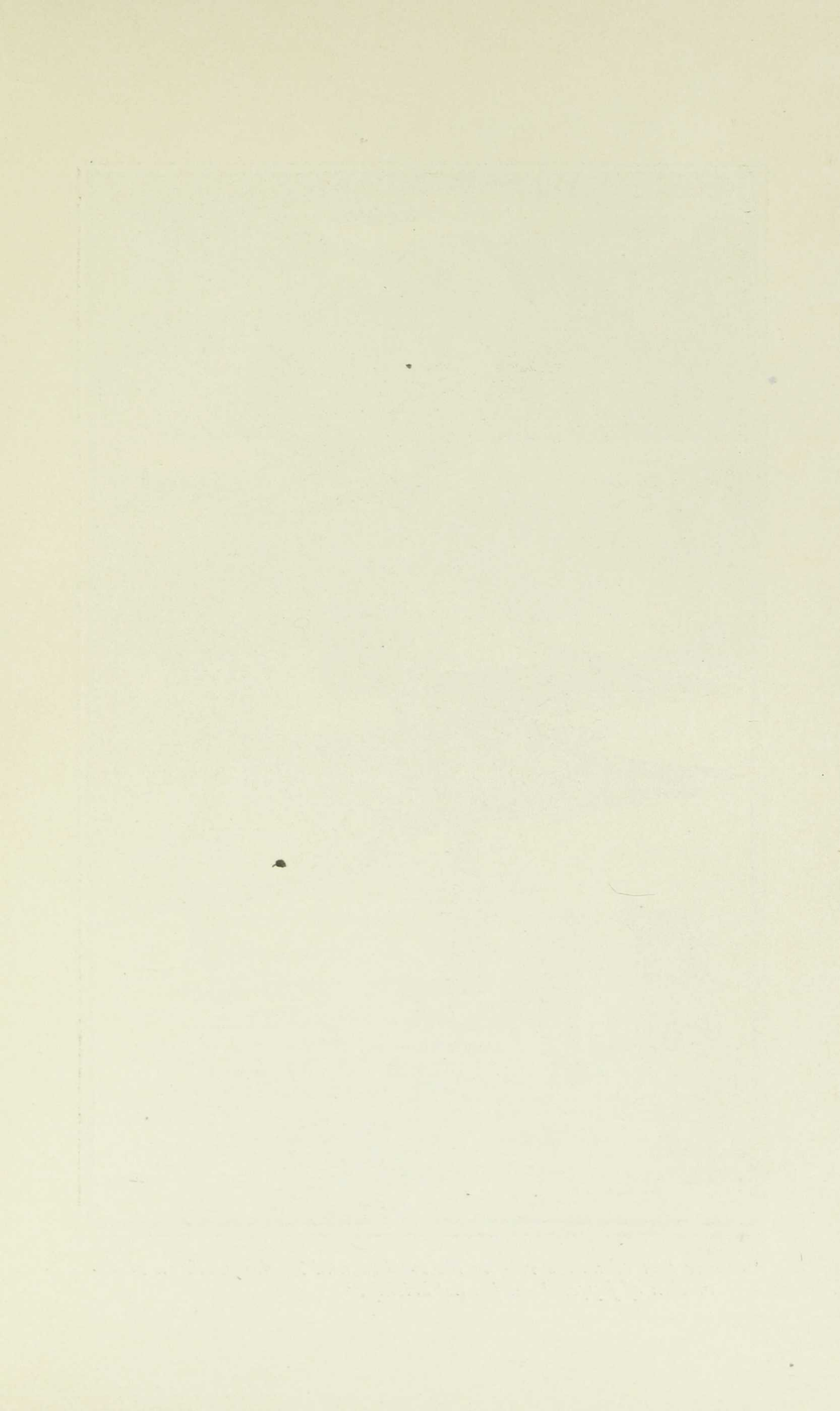
"Joodar, son of Omar," said the Moor, "do my bidding as you did that of my unsuccessful brother yesterday. Bind my hands with this silken cord; throw me into the water. If my hands appear, haste to draw me ashore, and you shall be richly rewarded. If my feet come uppermost, it is useless to attempt to save me. Go your way as before to the house of Shumeyah the Jew, who will receive the mule, and reward you with a hundred pieces of gold."

Joodar would have pleaded with the Moor to abandon his rash enterprise; but the stranger was determined, would listen to no reason, and calmly kept on with his preparations. Seeing him so determined, Joodar did as he was bid. The Moor sprang into the lake and disappeared, with, alas! the same result as before. In a short time his feet arose to the surface, then sank to rise no more.

Joodar drove the mule back to the Jew, who sighed as he counted out the money. "He should have been content," said Shumeyah, as if to himself; "I told him how it would be, but he would not hear me."

Joodar carried the hundred pieces of gold, and added them to what he had previously received. Next day, excited by his adventures, he could not resist again betaking himself to the shore of Lake Karoon. It seemed quite natural to him to find there a third stranger exactly resembling the two unfortunates who had drowned themselves before his eyes.

"I know what you would have of me," cried the honest fisherman. "Bind your hands, cast you into the water, drive your mule back, and get a hundred pieces



"Soon a pair of hands rose to the surface, and Zoodar, with an exclamation of joy, cast out his net briskly."

of gold for the job. But, by the beard of the prophet, I'm tired of the business. I'll not stand by and see another fellow-creature drowned, heretic though he be."

"Something tells me that I shall escape the fate of my two unhappy brothers," answered the Moor, with a grave smile. "Say what you will, Joodar, you can't prevent me from trying the experiment."

So the end of it was, that Joodar tied his hands, and saw him leap boldly into the forbidding sheet of water. Soon, a pair of hands rose to the surface, and Joodar, with an exclamation of joy, cast out his net briskly, bringing to land, after some struggling, the Moor safe and sound. In his hand he held two fishes, red as coral.

"Quick! Fetch me the two glass boxes you will find in my saddle-bags," cried the traveller, as soon as he was free of the net.

Joodar fetched the boxes, and in them the Moor placed the two fishes he had brought from the bottom of the lake. Having done this, he embraced Joodar, saying:

"I owe my life to you, and I shall not prove ungrateful. Know that my father was a mighty magician, and that the two who perished in your sight, and myself, are his three sons. At his death, there was distributed between us an immense fortune. But more than all else, each coveted as his own the invaluable book of magic from which our father derived his wisdom. This could not be divided, and upon opening it, we read upon the fly-leaf, written in our father's hand, these words: 'Rest content, my children, with the wealth I have amassed, and seek not to acquire the magic art. The only one of you who is entitled to hold this book, must be he who shall acquire the treas-

ures of Shamardal. These treasures, consisting of a sword, a salve-pot, a talisman, and a seal-ring, are so hidden from mortal sight, that to know how to reach them, you must first capture two sons of the Red King, who have changed themselves into red fish and inhabit the lonely lake of Karoon. It is impossible to effect this capture without terrible risk to your own lives, and nobody living can help you, except a young fisherman living at Cairo, named Joodar, son of Omar, if you are so rash as to attempt the venture.' For a time we were content to enjoy life and wealth, without disobeying our father's expressed wish. But, at length, our longing to dabble in the art of magic, and to handle the treasures of Shamardal, became so powerful as to make us think of nothing else by night and by day. We resolved to risk the capture of the coral fishes ; and how it was accomplished, you know. My poor brothers were, it appears, predestined to meet their death, and to me has fallen the great inheritance. To you, to whom I owe so much, I offer myself as a friend and brother. Without you, so says the writing of my father, the sealed treasures of Shamardal cannot be opened. Come then, I pray you, travel with me to my own country, and I will give you riches to last the remainder of your days, and to be left behind you when you die."

Joodar pondered over these strange things, and finally decided to accept the invitation, asking only time to say farewell to his mother, and to leave every provision for her comfort. He did so ; and then they mounted together on the mule, who in a short time began speeding over plains and mountains, with the swiftness of the wind.

"She is an enchanted beast," said the Moor, smiling at Joodar's astonishment. "Now, as we have travelled

several hundred miles, it will be well to take refreshment."

"With all my heart," said Joodar, who was very hungry; "but seeing that we are in the middle of a desert, I don't know where you expect to find food and drink."

"Here," answered the Moor, tapping his saddle-bags, as they alighted. "Say what you like best, and you shall have it."

Joodar named his favorite dish, and the Moor proceeded to draw from the saddle-bags, not only a bountiful supply of that dainty, served in a golden platter, but another, and another, smoking hot and savory, with fruit and sweets, flagons of ruby wine, and napkins fringed with silver. Joodar's eyes grew big with delight and astonishment.

"So long as we journey, we may call for what we will," remarked the Moor. "But come, my friend, begin and eat your fill."

Joodar needed no second invitation. Never had he eaten such delicious food. They resumed their ride and, by nightfall, reached a splendid palace, where the Moor was greeted as master by trains of gorgeous slaves, and where Joodar was assigned a chamber of marble, hung with silks and cooled by fountains of orange-flower water plashing in jewelled basins.

After a few days' sojourn in the Moor's palace, Joodar was informed that, on the morrow, they would set out for the valley of the treasures of Shamardal.

Mounted, as before, on the enchanted mule, the two travelled through a vast and impenetrable wilderness, pausing upon the bank of a mighty river. Here, at the Moor's direction, Joodar kindled a fire of sticks. "And now, Joodar, you are approaching the critical moment

of our experiment," said the Moor, who suddenly grew to an immense height, while his features assumed an aspect far more noble and commanding than that of any monarch. "All depends upon your obedience and your courage. When I begin to chant, as I shall presently do, do not interrupt me by a word. Show no surprise at what you may see, and when the gates of Shamardal open before you, press fearlessly forward to enter them. Combat every form you meet, no matter what, striking at it with all your might, with the sword I now give to you."

Joodar bowed in silence, and the Moor, taking from his robe the two glass boxes containing the coral fishes, broke them above the fire, at the same time casting incense into the flame, and muttering mystic words. The fish changed into two enormous genii, who curled up into the air like flames.

"Genii, I conjure ye," said the Moor, in a voice of thunder. "You are my slaves, and to me you must open the gates of Shamardal. Behold the youth Joodar, son of Omar, who is predestined to enter there."

"Lord, we obey," answered the genii, crouching to earth in submissive attitude.

The Moor began to chant words in a tongue that Joodar could not comprehend. And now was heard the rustling of boughs in the forest, as if a great storm were at hand. The wind moaned and the river dashed huge billows on the bank. Then the earth quaked and loud thunder was heard. All became dark, save the river, which shone with an unearthly light, as it was sucked up into a broad column like a gigantic water-spout, revealing, in the dry bed of the stream, the gilded door of a subterranean cavern. Summoning all his courage, and with drawn sword in hand, Joodar leaped into the

chasm, knocking thrice upon the door. The gates flew open, and an armed man, rushing out, struck furiously at Joodar with his scimetar, but was repulsed as lustily. Within was a second gate, where the same experience awaited him. At the third gate, a lion bounded forth. At the fourth, two serpents coiled up to attack him. But each and all of these enemies vanished at the first touch of his sword, for they saw that the new-comer was armed with true courage, against which they were powerless. At last came an apparition that made Joodar's stout heart quail. Who should appear but his own mother, clasping her hands, and imploring him not to strike her? Joodar's sword-arm fell nerveless by his side, and immediately the image of his mother vanished, a mocking laugh echoed near, and he received a violent blow in the face, knocking him senseless. Then was heard the clanging-to of iron doors, the yell of triumphant laughter, the rush of a mighty wave, as the river, returning to its bed, cast Joodar, bleeding and insensible, on the bank at the feet of his friend.

"You should have been prepared for the many tricks of magic," said the Moor, when Joodar came to himself. "The image of your mother was but a shape sent to tempt you. I do not blame you, since you have proved your manhood and fidelity. Only, we must wait now for another year before we repeat our experiment."

The year was spent pleasantly enough in the palace of the Moor, who redoubled his kindness to Joodar. When again the moment came to test the opening of the vaults, all happened as before. The river rolled back, Joodar passed through several doors successfully, and when he reached the last, the image of his mother

appeared, with streaming eyes, and clasped hands, imploring him to spare her. Closing his eyes, Joodar uttered a short prayer, and aimed a blow at her with the sword, which to his surprise seemed to cut the air. The phantom vanished, and instead of laughter around him, he heard groans and exclamations of rage. The great doors rolled back, disclosing, in all its majesty, the tomb of Shamardal! There, in full view, lay the four coveted treasures: the sword, the pot of ointment, the talisman and the seal-ring. No wonder the Moor longed to possess them! With that sword in his hand, any adversary who might confront him would fall as if struck by lightning; by rubbing the eyelids with that salve, all hidden treasures of the earth would be revealed; by touching the talisman, one might look upon the doings of the whole world at once; while the owner of the ring would have power to order and compel obedience from any monarch of the earth!

Taking possession of the treasures, Joodar turned to go; as he did so, a mighty volume of sound, like the triumphant shouts of liberated spirits, burst upon his ears. The walls of the cavern seemed to fall, and a tremendous current of air wafted him, half-senseless, across the portal, through the channel of the river, to the feet of the friendly Moor.

And now, his task accomplished, Joodar begged his friend to allow him to return home, as he felt naturally anxious to see his mother. The Moor loaded him with gold and jewels, and insisted upon his asking for whichever one of the treasures he might prefer to own. Joodar shook his head.

"I've had enough of magic," he said; "unless, indeed, I might own that kitchen genius who supplies the saddle-bags. He is a fellow after my own heart."

The Moor presented him with the saddle-bags, and mounted him on the enchanted mule, who travelled like the wind in the direction of Joodar's home, leaving him there at dusk. When he reached the gates of the city, the first object Joodar descried was his own mother, half-starved and ragged, begging for alms of every passer-by. When she found that her son had returned, the poor woman nearly died of joy. What was Joodar's disgust to find that the gold he had left at home, enough to have sustained her in luxury for ten years, had been spent by the two wicked brothers, after wasting their own ill-gotten gains in a distant land.

"We are all now in equal misery," said the unfortunate mother. "Your unhappy brothers are starving, and, in spite of their ingratitude, I cannot forsake them. What little I get from the charitable, goes to nourish them and myself."

When Joodar saw the destitution of their home, and the wan faces of his miserable brothers, his kind heart forgave them everything. Leading his mother into an inner room, he told her the secret of the saddle-bags, and quickly conjured up a warm and generous meal, which all enjoyed. The same day he purchased furniture and household utensils, clothing, and everything necessary to make happiness return to the impoverished establishment. For a time, the brothers were all gratitude and devotion, but, by-and-by, they began to wonder how it was that Joodar and their mother produced these delicious meals, without either going to market or shop, or kindling a fire to cook with. Idleness breeds curiosity, as we know, and in an unlucky moment the two vagabonds discovered the secret of the saddle-bags. From that moment, they re-

solved to get rid of Joodar, and live in indulgence of their gluttonous tastes without his aid. To this end, they consulted with a disreputable old slave-trader, about to send a cargo away from their port. The slave-trader agreed to carry out their plot, and on an appointed day, he and two of his followers came to sup at the house of Joodar.

Joodar received them, as he did all guests, with open-handed hospitality. A bountiful meal was placed at their disposal. Roast fowls, rice, kabobs, honey, sweetmeats, fruits and wine were all there ; and when they had finished, they invited Joodar to walk with them to the water-side to view their vessel. Once on the wharf, he was seized, gagged, and carried aboard the pirate ship, which immediately set sail. The two brothers persuaded their mother that her son had decided to go upon another voyage in search of fortune, in answer to a summons from his Moorish friend, leaving the saddle-bags and his store of gold for their own use, during his absence.

For more than a twelvemonth did Joodar endure the painful lot of a galley-slave ; hard work and privation were his daily lot. At last the vessel whose oars he helped to tug, was wrecked on the coast of Barbary, and the entire crew, with the exception of himself, were lost. After many adventures, he took service with a merchant intending to go to Mecca, and they set out upon the long and weary pilgrimage.

In the holy city, to Joodar's delight, he met his friend, the Moorish magician, who welcomed him most cordially, releasing him from his bond to the merchant, and loading him with favors.

"Tell me what more I can do for you ?" asked the Moor, finally.

"I should like to see all that has gone on since my absence from home," answered Joodar, sadly.

The Moor rubbed his talisman, and a cloud of smoke arose. As it cleared away, Joodar saw, in a vision, the figures of his mother and his two brothers. In the first scene revealed to him, the mother was weeping, and asking why Joodar had left her without saying farewell. To this, the brothers answered it was because he had to obey the summons of the Moor, no matter when and where he might be called. This picture became dim, and was succeeded by another, which showed the wicked wretches, weary of their mother's lamentations for her absent son, despoiling and beating her. Then ensued a violent quarrel over the goods, each claiming the saddle-bags, which were no good if divided. Upon the noise they made in this dispute, an officer rushed in, the jewels and saddle-bags were placed in the royal treasury, the brothers were cast into prison, and the mother was provided for by royal order.

"It is clear that I should be at home," said Joodar, mournfully.

"Be of good cheer," said the Moor, taking from his finger the ring of Shamardal. "I have resolved to bestow upon you this share of my treasures, which indeed, you most richly deserve. As I am about to retire to a retreat where I may indulge in the study of magic undisturbed, it is probable we may not meet again. Never allow this ring to leave your finger, and a touch upon it will place at your command a powerful slave, one of the mightiest of the genii."

Joodar received the noble gift, taking leave of his benefactor with many tears. With a wish and a touch upon the ring, he was at Cairo, in the street before his

mother's house. The meeting between them was most joyful, and Joodar learned that his brothers were still in prison, while the Sultan, not being able to resist the splendid jewels of the Moor, had seized upon them and the saddle-bags, under the pretence of confiscating them to the service of Allah.

Joodar listened in silence, then, summoning the Spirit of the Ring, ordered him to transport the wicked brothers into the room where he sat. When these wretches, ragged and degraded, arrived before their brother, they fell abjectly upon their faces, terrified beyond measure at the appearance of the genie who had conveyed them hither. Joodar, refusing to listen to their excuses, sentenced them to be carried into a far away mountainous country, where they might break stones for an honest living.

"What you did to me, I might have pardoned," he said severely; "but your cruelty to our helpless mother deserves a far worse fate than is allotted you." And immediately they were carried by the genie into exile.

Then Joodar rubbed his ring, commanding that during the night a superb palace should be erected, furnished in every part and provided with everything needful to a royal home. At sunrise next morning, the inhabitants of Cairo gathered in crowds to admire the beautiful dwelling with its crystal dome and walls of fretted marble, that had sprung up in the night.

The same morning, the Sultan's treasurer, pale with alarm, ran to tell his master, that although neither bolt nor bar of the treasury had been disturbed, the entire contents of the vaults had been removed.

"Who is this man who has built his palace in a night?" quoth the angry Sultan. "He, no doubt, is

the thief, and with his spoils he has worked this miracle. Send at once to order him to appear before me."

So an officer with fifty men proceeded to the palace of Joodar, where they found sitting before the door a single black slave of gigantic frame, who held in his hand a wand no larger than a wire. Upon their demand for Joodar, the slave, who was really the Spirit of the Ring, replied that his master could not be seen, no matter who asked for him. The enraged officer struck at him with his mace, but the slave, lightly as if he had been brushing off so many flies, put one after another of the soldiers to flight.

Off ran the officer in dismay, returning with a hundred fresh men, who now fell left and right, as if knocked down by a shower of blinding hailstones. Such a disgrace to the army of the Sultan could not be thought of! Evidently the palace and its owner were under the protection of some magic power, and the Vizier suggested that the Sultan had better treat Joodar as a friend than as an enemy.

The Sultan thought over the matter, coming to the wise conclusion that he was being punished for his unjust seizure of Joodar's saddle-bags and jewels. So, accompanied by a large body of picked troops, he rode in state to the palace of the upstart, which to his surprise he found guarded by row upon row of troops in shining armor, conjured there for the moment by the Spirit of the Ring.

Joodar received his distinguished guest with a stern and questioning look, and the Sultan, completely abashed, owned that, urged by covetousness, he had been tempted to appropriate the wonderful gems and saddle-bags.

"If you are willing to own to this," said the haughty

Joodar, "let there be peace between us. Nothing belonging to your treasury shall be found missing when next you enter it."

The Sultan rode home, receiving on his departure a chain of pearls as large as pigeons' eggs, and a jewelled scimetar, the like of which no eye had seen. His next thought was that one so rich and powerful as Joodar should be bound to him by the ties of marriage. So he entrusted his prime minister to arrange an alliance between the owner of the Spirit of the Ring and his own lovely daughter. Joodar consented readily, and in a short time became the husband of the most beautiful creature in the land.

Upon the Sultan's death, Joodar succeeded him, reigning long and happily. As for the two wicked brothers, they continued to pound stones for the remainder of their days.

"I almost think there can't be a better one than that," commented the little boy. "But I won't say yet."

THE NORWEGIAN WEDDING CROWN'S STORY.

THE object that spoke the next day, was a high crown of filigree silver, wrought in points like leaves, and set with colored stones. It occupied a lofty position on the summit of a neighboring cabinet, and, by the maid who reverently dusted it, was believed to have been the property of some great and proud monarch.

"Although my mistress—my late mistress, I should say—was only a fisherman's wife," remarked the crown, "she held her head pretty high, for she came of a family that for several generations had handed *me* down as an heirloom. I am a marriage-crown, as I heard your father explaining to you the other day, and to wear one of my elegance is an undoubted mark of gentility among the Norwegian peasants. Well do I remember the pride with which the women of the family would take me from the shelf, and polish and rub me up to be the chief glory of the wedding festival. That polishing-time was also a signal for a lecture to the bride-to-be ; and I cannot remember that she ever relished it any more than you seem to do the remarks of your worthy governess."

"Let's skip the worthy governess," said Regi ; "and tell me what sort of a house you lived in."

"I have lived in various houses. Perhaps the one before the last would have pleased you most. The

owners were well-to-do people, and they kept it in good order. The walls and floor were made of polished wood that smelt very sweet when the fires were lighted. Around the rafters they carved texts, which were painted in red and blue. The chairs and tables, benches and cupboards, and the stationary beds were also carved beautifully with bears and foxes, wheat and brambles, pine-cones and flowers of field and forest. On the shelves were ornaments, consisting of whales' teeth, silver spoons from Lapland, chains, buttons and belts of silver, shells and various curiosities brought by sailor friends from other countries. When my late mistress married, her parents were much displeased with her for taking up with a mere fisherman. But she loved him, and gave up her pretty home to follow him to the humble cottage on the shore of a shining fiord, where around them rose high mountains so close as to make it impossible to see the sun, except when he was directly overhead; but they had light enough and to spare during midsummer, when the sun shines in Norway not only all day, but nearly all night. I did not go to reside with my late mistress, you understand, until after she had two children to brighten her little hut. In the meantime, her parents had died unreconciled, her eldest brother inherited the house; and, as if in mockery of her poverty, nothing fell to the poor woman's share but Me.

"I remember the day she unpacked me. She was still sorrowing for her parents, and when she saw me, her wedding-day came back so vividly! The festivals, the cart with the green boughs, in which he and she rode to the village church, the train of merry folk that followed them, her pride when I was set upon her flaxen locks, above her rosy cheeks and bright blue eyes!

"She cried over me for a while, and when she got up to put me away and go back to her spinning, I saw her give a glance at a cheap little mirror on the dresser, where she saw no more roses in the cheeks reflected there, but a sun-burned brown instead, and hair thin and gray under the matron's coif. Just at this moment the door burst open, and in rushed two splendid romping children. They hugged her fondly, and kissed a glow into her sunken cheeks, as they wondered and exclaimed over the wedding crown. There were no more tears after that. The mother's heart was full of peace and joy."

"I hope you won't mind," said Regi, civilly; "but I don't care so very much for what people *think* about, I like what they *do*, so much better. Though I like that mother, too," he added, apologetically.

"Well, I ought to be old enough to know child's nature better," said the marriage-crown, kindly. "I shall try to be more entertaining. Let me tell you about the life those children led. There was little that was bright or smiling in their surroundings. The hut was one of a sparse settlement, almost cut off from the outer world in winter. In summer a few sailing vessels and steamers would plough the still waters of their gloomy sound. Now and again, their father sailed with them in his boat to barter fish for household necessaries at the nearest village. Those were wonderful occasions, and served for conversation during the winter evenings while they sat carving wood, or making fish-nets by the fire, listening to the winds howl like wild beasts at bay, around their hut. On these voyages also, there was to be seen a slope here and there covered with verdure, and a joyful sight this was to the eye wearied of monotonous gray cliffs.

"At certain seasons they had the excitement of searching for down in the nests of the eider-ducks. This down, the softest and finest in the world, was plucked from their own breasts by the mother birds, to keep their fledglings warm, and it always fetched a good price in the towns. Often, too, the children would rifle the eider nests, so prettily woven of moss and sea-weed, of their light-green eggs, as their mother welcomed a change in her everlasting fish cookery, and could make many delicious dishes with the aid of eider eggs."

"What else did they eat?" asked Regi, who was always interested in the commissariat.

"A sort of flat gingerbread, for one thing, tasting like sawdust; and other bread made of flour mixed with powdered bark of trees. Then they had good milk to drink, for they kept a cow; sometimes they ate also dried herring, salmon roes, reindeer's meat and reindeer's tongues. On their summer trips, the children saw whales and walruses disporting themselves, as well as troops of reindeer swimming across narrow bodies of water to reach the land beyond. But the grand thing was to be shut in, warm and snug, of an autumn evening, and listen to the cataract thundering down the hills, the scream of sea-birds, and the thousand voices of the night in clamor around their dwelling! Then was the time to coax stories out of the fisherman, who was a rare talker when he chose to be. To tell you one of those legends here in this fine room would make it seem rather flat; but perhaps you have never heard of 'Grimsbork;' that's a tale that'll do anywhere. And this is it:"

Once upon a time there lived a youth named Jonas, whose entire fortune consisted of ten cows, each with a

calf running at her heels, and a skinny little colt at which everybody laughed.

One day when Jonas was tending his cattle in the fields, he saw a royal herald ride along the road, blowing a golden trumpet. Hastening to the roadside, he heard the herald proclaiming that a Troll (this, you must know, is a wicked mountain fairy) had just carried off the king's only daughter, and that his majesty had promised her hand and half the kingdom to whosoever should bring the poor little princess back. As yet, nobody had been found rash enough to undertake the exploit, for the Trolls in the neighborhood were very powerful, and to incur their rage and spite was a terrible thing.

Jonas stood musing upon what he had heard, when the skinny colt came up and spoke to him.

"I could help you, master," said the colt, "but I am afraid you will never be willing to do what is necessary first."

"You help me!" exclaimed Jonas, laughing. "However, tell me what your idea is. At least it can do no harm."

"If you will kill every one of these calves and let me have the milk of ten cows for a year, I shall grow strong and powerful," said the colt. "Then you will see what I can do toward recovering the princess."

Jonas thought a while, then decided to kill his calves and sell them to the butcher. For a whole year the colt lived upon the milk of ten cows; and at the end of that time, you would not have known him. He had become a large, beautifully shaped creature, with silver-shining sides, and bright, intelligent eyes.

In the spring the ten cows again had calves, and again the colt asked Jonas to kill them and to let him

have the milk. This Jonas did, and by the following year his colt had become so tall that his master could hardly reach his mane when standing on tiptoe, while his sides were more glossy than ever. For still another year Jonas fed his good steed as before, and by this time, Grimsbork, for so his master named him, was so enormous that he had to kneel down to enable Jonas to mount him. His color was a beautiful silver-cream; his snowy mane and tail were long and crinkled; his coat shone like a mirror. Never was seen such a rare and radiant steed as Grimsbork! Jonas spent all the money he had accumulated from the sale of his calves in purchasing a saddle and bridle of gilded leather, and shoes of silver for his treasure. He mounted Grimsbork; at the first canter, stones flew high in the air, and when he galloped, it sounded like thunder among the hills.

Jonas rode straight to the king's palace, and offered himself to go in search of the lost maiden. At sight of this magnificent horse and the stripling rider, the king was so astonished he could hardly speak.

"First give me stable room and quarters for the night," said Jonas; "and by to-morrow we will set out."

The best stall in the king's stable was given to Grimsbork, and the best room in the palace was assigned to Jonas. In the night Jonas, who could not sleep, stole down into the stable and consulted Grimsbork.

"We are undertaking what we can't carry out, I fear," the youth said, anxiously. "Who ever heard of any one escaping alive from the power of the Trolls. In addition to losing our lives, we shall be a laughing-stock to the whole nation."

"Fear nothing, master," said Grimsbork. "To-

"Jonas rode straight to the king's palace, and offered himself to go in search of the lost maiden."

morrow morning, before we start, ask for twenty pounds of iron and twelve pounds of steel to make me new shoes. And there must be one smith to forge, another to nail the shoes on."

All was done as Grimsbork suggested. He was splendidly shod, and at the appointed time galloped away with his rider amid clouds of dust. A long way they rode, until they came to the Trolls' mountain, into which the princess had been taken. This mountain was as steep as a wall, and as slippery as glass. For miles distant you could see it, glittering like a precipice of steel.

"Here we go!" snorted Grimsbork, charging at the mountain; but he slipped back, and came down to the bottom with a crash like an earthquake. "Again!" he said, and succeeded in getting a little farther up, to slip back with such force as to jar the entire mountain.

High up on the summit, under a dome of crystal, they could see the pretty princess, holding out her arms and begging to be delivered from the power of the wicked Troll.

Grimsbork took a fresh start, and this time rushed up with such force, that stones flew about him up to the very sky. They reached the top in safety, and with a blow of his hoof, Grimsbork shattered the crystal dome into fragments. Out rushed the princess joyously, her eyes gleaming like stars.

"You are my gallant deliverer," she cried, and Jonas lifted her to the seat behind him and hurried away, as by this time a hive of angry Trolls, like ants in a heap, came up to the surface of the mountain, threatening and cursing them. The ride down was fearful, as you may believe; but Grimsbork kept his footing securely,

and in safety reached the palace, where Jonas put the princess in her royal father's arms.

Now that the king had his daughter back again, he was not so very anxious to give her up, so he made excuses.

"I really can't give my daughter's hand in marriage," the crafty old fellow said to Jonas, "until we can get the sun to shine in at the palace windows on the east."

Now, before the palace windows on the east arose a mighty mountain which cast a black shadow on all beneath it. Jonas told Grimsbork of his difficulty, and Grimsbork asked only for new shoes like the last, twenty pounds of iron and twelve of steel, with a smith to forge them and another to nail them on. This was granted, and Jonas got into the saddle. Away with a bound, they flew up the mountain. At every stride the mountain sank farther into the earth, till by the time they had ridden back and forth a few times, there was nothing left but a valley in its place. Then, when the sun shone gloriously into the palace windows on the east, Jonas asked again for his bride.

"You have certainly deserved her," said the wily king, "but you couldn't expect me to see her ride to church on a horse that was inferior to her bridegroom's. When you can fetch me a steed that will equal Grimsbork, she shall be yours with pleasure."

Jonas went off dejected, for he knew there was but one Grimsbork. When he had communicated his trouble to his steed, the faithful creature paused a while before speaking.

"This is a troublesome business," he answered, at last. "There is only one like me, and he is kept underground by a mighty magician. However, we can but do our

best. Now, go to the king and ask for new shoes for me, exactly like the last, twenty pounds of iron and twelve of steel, a smith to forge them, and another smith to nail them on. Then ask for twelve sacks of rye, twelve sacks of barley, and twelve slaughtered oxen. Also ask for twelve ox-hides, each studded with a hundred spikes, and a barrel filled with tar."

The king promised all these queer things willingly enough, hoping to get rid of the youth forever. Jonas loaded Grimsbork with the rye, and the barley, and the carcasses, and the hides, and the barrel filled with tar; and they set off at a gallop. When they had ridden a long way over mountain and heath, Grimsbork asked Jonas what he heard.

"Nothing but the chirping of many birds."

"Just as I supposed. All the wild birds of the forest are in pursuit of us. Cut a hole in the grain sacks, and that will keep them busy."

Jonas cut a hole in the sacks, and out streamed the rye and barley like a river on the ground. Then came the wild birds in such numbers as to darken the sun. As soon as they saw the grain, they darted down on it, and began fighting with each other, so that the travellers got away unnoticed.

Over hill and dale, over forest and heath, Jonas rode. Then Grimsbork asked him what he heard.

"Oh! there is a terrible roaring noise," said Jonas.

"Those are all the wild beasts of the forest sent to stop us," answered Grimsbork. "Quick, throw out the carcasses of your oxen, and that will keep them busy." As Jonas threw the oxen down, there came out of the woods an immense number of lions, bears, wolves, and hyenas with their mouths wide open. They fell upon the raw meat eagerly, and soon began snarl-

ing and growling at each other, forgetting the object of their chase.

Over hill and dale, over forest and heath, Grimsbork rushed like the wind.

"Do you hear anything?" he asked the youth.

"It seems to me that, a long way off, I hear the neighing of a colt," answered Jonas.

Over hill and dale, over forest and heath, they rushed onward. At every stride the neighing sounded louder, until it became a tremendous clamor.

"We are coming to him now," said Grimsbork. "Make haste and empty the barrel of tar over this field; cover me with the spiked ox-hides; and then climb into yonder tall pine-tree. If I win the battle, you must take off my bridle and put it on my rival's neck, and he will become gentle like myself. If I lose—why, so much the worse for both of us."

When Jonas had climbed into the tallest pine-tree, there came out of a cavern a cream-colored horse quite as beautiful as Grimsbork. But his coat shone with a light like phosphorus, and from his nostrils spurted jets of flame. The battle began at once, the new-comer darting upon the mysterious bundle of ox-hides, biting and kicking it furiously. Soon the fire from his nostrils caught the sheet of tar, and he could not see where he was striking, for the flames. While he was losing strength plunging so madly, Grimsbork, sheltered by the spiked hides, was unhurt, and in a short time the new horse fell exhausted. Seeing this, Jonas slipped down from the tree, and threw his bridle over the captive, who at once became as docile as a lamb. When the two horses stood side by side, you could not have told them apart; so Jonas saddled and rode the new one back to the king's palace, Grimsbork running loose beside them.

Great was the wonder at court, over the reappearance of the champion, riding one horse and leading its double. The king tried to seem pleased, but in his heart vowed to get the better of Jonas yet.

"Before the marriage comes off, we will have a game of hide-and-seek," said he. "If you can find my daughter twice running, and if she fails to find you twice running, then the wedding shall go on without delay."

"All right," said Jonas.

The princess was first to hide; she changed herself into a lily-white swan, and floated upon the castle moat.

"Where is she, Grimsbork?" asked the youth.

"Take your gun and level it at yonder swan, and you will see," answered his steed.

"Don't shoot, it is I, your bride betrothed," cried the princess, when Jonas aimed at her; and she was found.

The second time she changed herself into a loaf of bread, and took her place among a row of four others that the cook had just set upon the table.

"Where is she, Grimsbork?" asked his master.

"Take the long carving-knife and offer to cut a slice from the third loaf on the left hand, of four loaves that lie on the table of the royal kitchen," said his friend.

Jonas went into the kitchen, pretending to be very hungry.

"I should relish a slice of this nice warm loaf," he said, laying his hand on the third loaf, and brandishing over it a long, sharp carving-knife.

"Don't cut, dear friend; it is I, your bride betrothed," said the princess, coming forth!

Now it was his turn to hide twice running. First he changed himself into a hornet, and hid in Grims-

bork's right ear. When the princess, having sought everywhere else, came timidly into Grimsbork's stall, the great beast began stamping and kicking so that she ran away in terror.

"I give it up!" cried the princess, and at once Jonas came out of the stall and stood beside her. The second time he became a pebble, and was caught in Grimsbork's hoof. This time the king, the chamberlains, the courtiers, the pages, everybody, helped the princess to look for him. The last place they came to was Grimsbork's stall; but the good steed set up such a tremendous plunging and neighing and kicking, that the entire court took fright and scampered a mile away before they could stop running.

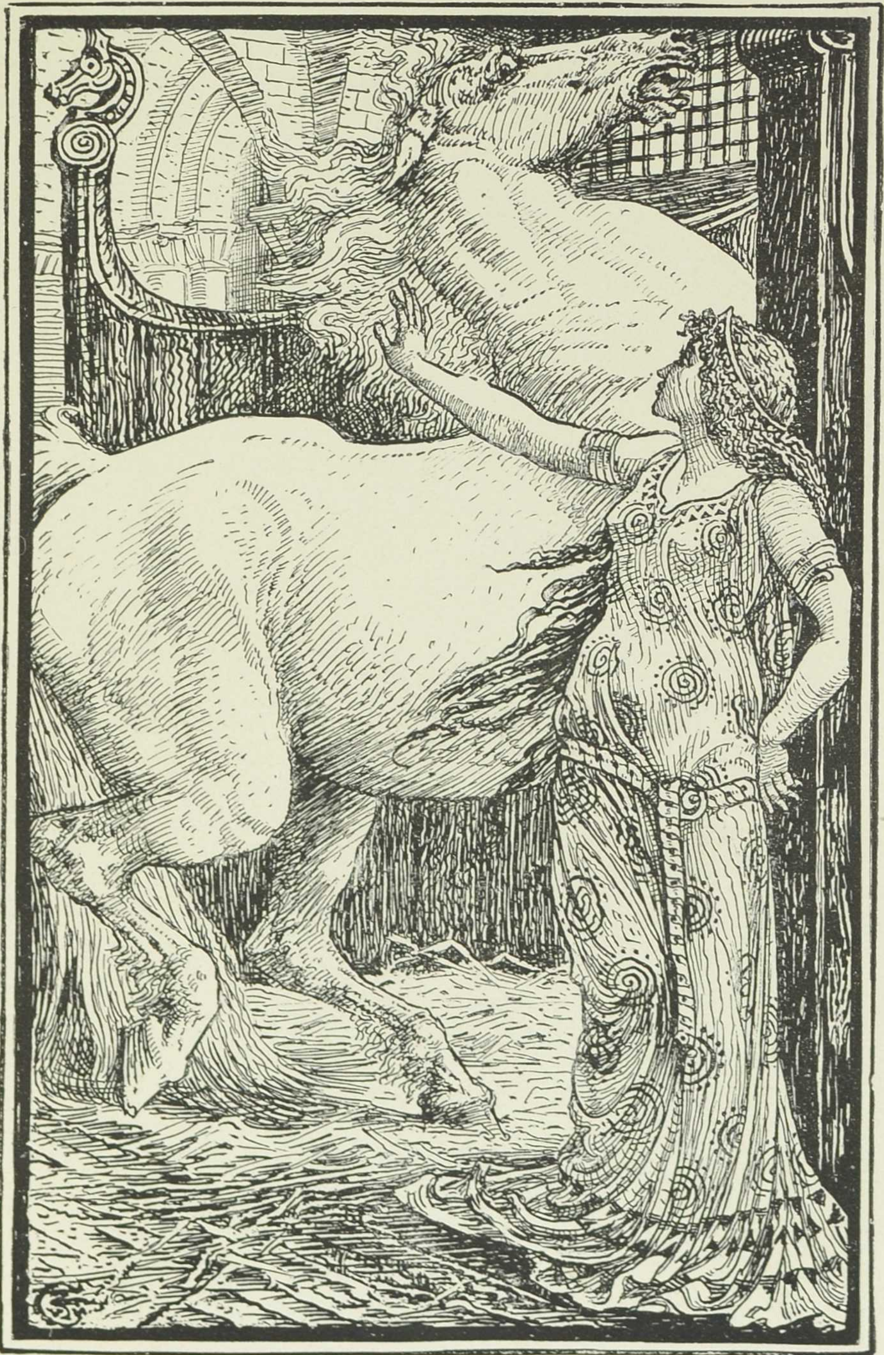
"I give it up!" cried the princess, out of breath. At once Jonas stepped from under Grimsbork's foot, and made her a low bow.

In vain did the king desire to object again, for now even he had to admit that Jonas had fairly won his bride. So she was dressed up grandly, the marriage crown was set upon her locks; and, mounted upon their two splendid cream-colored horses, the young couple rode to church. Such a sight was never seen in that or any other country.

"Thank you," said Regi, with a sigh of satisfaction. "How those fellows had to work to get their brides? I'd like to own a pair of magic Grimsborks. Wouldn't I drive 'em in the Park though? But there's one thing I want to ask you, old crown. How did you get here, if they set such store by you?"

The marriage crown sighed deeply.

"It's a sad story," she said. "The fisherman fell ill,



"When the princess came timidly into Grimsbork's stall the great beast began stamping and kicking so that she ran away in terror."

and the family almost starved before they would part with me to a funny-looking Lapp pedler who came their way."

"When I go to Norway, I shall look them up, and give you back again," said Regi, consolingly.

THE CHINESE MANDARIN'S STORY.

"You ought to have a story to tell, old fellow," Regi said one afternoon, addressing himself to the figure of a Chinese mandarin with a bald, shiny head like an egg-shell, which it had been long one of the little boy's pet bits of mischief to set in motion till it threatened to wag off.

A mandarin is a man of high rank in China, you know, and images representing him are made in porcelain, brilliantly decorated in gold and colors, having heads swung upon a pivot that nod grotesquely at a touch.

"I wonder if you would feel inclined to make yourself agreeable to a person who had persistently played tricks on you ever since he was old enough to stand on tiptoe on the drawing-room ottomans," returned the mandarin. "However, I was a wedding present to your mother from an old friend of hers, a merchant in the China trade, who brought me over in his state-room, carefully wrapped and packed in a lacquer-box; and I feel rather more entitled to a voice in this twelve-day carnival than any of these new-comers, so I will try to forgive and forget your sins against my dignity. Yes, we have plenty of stories in our flowery kingdom; but my own taste is for the quiet ones, and I'm afraid I can't entertain you with anything as sensational as the kind of tales some of these cut-and-thrust charac-

ters around us delight in." Here he directed a spiteful squint at a bull-fighter's sword upon the wall.

"I never thought children in your country could have much fun," Regi said, thoughtfully. "They always seem to be holding on to the ground to keep from falling off, when I have noticed them on plates and tea-boxes."

"They have all the fun that is good for them," said the mandarin, tartly; "the boys especially. They play at shuttlecock with the soles of their feet, for one thing, and that is certainly funny. They have Punch-and-Judy shows in abundance; fireworks and torpedoes, paper toys, lanterns and the very best kites you ever heard of. In spring-time, the air is full of kites, some like butterflies and birds, and some like dragons, centipedes and fishes, and others with lanterns fastened to their tails. Even the old grandfathers play with kites in China"——

"But a fellow wouldn't like to lick his grandfather if their tails got tangled up," Regi suggested.

"Then the little ones, with us, have pockets full of sugar-candy given to them, and yards of sugar-cane to suck. I knew a little boy once, named Lee, whose little mother was a widow," went on the mandarin, in a rambling fashion. "They lived in a little house with a little garden that Lee used to cultivate—yes, everything was little. When Lee and his mother went out to walk together, and you looked at their backs, you could hardly tell which was which. When Lee flew his kite, his mother sat in a bamboo chair at her front door and flew hers, too. His was in the shape of an eagle, hers resembled a big green beetle. Lee's mother sold flowers from her garden to the richer people of the town where they lived, and their small square of

earth was kept as neat as a pin, with straight paths and mounds of artificial rock-work, with the hedges and trees trained to grow down instead of up, and twisted into all sorts of queer shapes.

"Part of every day Lee went to school, where he sat close to the ground on a lacquer stool before a lacquer table, learning a language that would puzzle you very much; for there are no A, B, C's in Chinese, every word having a picture or sign to itself, that represents it. Rather a tedious business, when you come to learn them all, eh? When Lee ran home, he always found a nice bowl of smoking rice awaiting him, with sweetmeats cooked in syrup for his dessert. Then, after a little work in the garden, he was free to play with the other children of the town. When cold weather came, they had no fireside to gather round; but Lee's mother made for him a loose wadded jacket, and another for herself, in which they looked like two walking feather-beds.

"The spring was their beautiful time. When the red azalea came in bloom upon the distant hillsides, Lee's mother would take a holiday to go in a boat, rowing down the river, to a pretty spot she knew of, where they remained until dark, climbing over the banks where clover and butter-cups grew profusely, and roaming on the hilltops to gather other flowers. They would carry with them a luncheon of cakes and sweeties; and the two ate it sitting under a bower of pink and red blossoms, while Lee laughed and chatted with his mother, as happy as a king.

"When evening came, they got into the boat again, wreathing it with flowers from prow to stern, and lighting two or three melon-shaped lanterns to hang about it. Slowly sculling their way home along the placid

"When evening came they got into their boat again, wreathing it with flowers from prow to stern."

stream, they met or passed, or were passed by, boat-loads of their neighbors also going home after a day of pleasuring. Lights came out upon the river-banks, like glow-worms in the grass, and the sweet fragrance of many flowers was scattered on the air. To Lee, who lay in the bottom of the boat, crouched up against his mother's knee half asleep, wholly pleased, these expeditions were a source of purest joy.

"On the day following the holiday, it was his mother's custom to take Lee by the hand, and walk to the tomb of his father, where they would scatter flowers, and talk about him who was gone.

"By and by, when Lee had grown strong and vigorous, the little mother sickened. Throughout one long winter, he nursed her faithfully, cooked the fowl and the rice and the sweet cakes, under her directions, trying to amuse her and make her smile again. One breezy day he carried her out to the front of the house, and seated her in comfort, placing in her feeble hand the string of a new kite he had made for her amusement. This kite resembled an owl, and it was so large and strong it soon rose above the others, requiring all Lee's strength to hold it. Then his mother smiled, and he was rewarded for his pains.

"Soon, her appetite was lost entirely, and she said she could eat no more fowl or rice. 'If I could only taste a few young bamboo shoots, I think I should feel better,' the poor woman said, in a weak voice. Lee went out of the house, feeling very unhappy, since he knew there were no young shoots such as she coveted to be had at that season. He wandered afar into a bamboo plantation, and searched anxiously, but not a green tip appeared. Quite disheartened, he shed tears over one of the bare stems, and as the warm drops moistened

the ground around it, a miracle was worked. The tree put forth fresh buds in his sight ; and with eager hands he plucked a quantity of them, running back to his mother, who ate the succulent food with relish. As the spring advanced, she seemed to improve, and Lee almost every day carried her in his arms for a walk. People in the town would say, 'There goes Lee, the faithful son ;' and in our country, where respect to one's father and mother is religion itself, this was no mean praise, you may believe.

"All her life long, the mother had been particularly nervous in a thunder-storm. When a great one came on, she would shiver and turn pale, and lie in her little bed-place until the storm was over, Lee comforting her as best he was able, laughing and singing to cheer her. One day he was out in the garden at work, not noticing the black clouds gathering over the sky, till a bright jagged flash and a terrible report of thunder threw him on the ground, stunned and senseless. When Lee came to himself, his first thought was for the invalid, and, staggering into the house, he called her name. No answer came, and, in despair, he saw her lying pale and still upon the couch. She had died of fright. Lee wrapped her in his arms, and shed hot tears over her cold cheeks, but she did not revive.

"The youth buried his beloved mother near his father, and went back to live in the lonely little house. 'Man cannot have a thousand years of prosperity, a flower cannot have a hundred days of bloom,' he said to himself, repeating the old proverb. Soon he made up his mind to offer himself to the Emperor for a soldier ; and going boldly up to the palace, he beat a drum which stood outside, in token that he would speak with his majesty in person.

"'What, is this Lee, the faithful son?' asked the Emperor, when he had heard his tale. So Lee was made a soldier, and as for some years the country was involved in a terrible war, he was continually fighting and marching, marching and fighting, without taking rest. He grew to be a great warrior in time, and the Tartars set a price upon his head. One night, when it was desirable to gain some information from the enemy's camp, Lee disguised himself in a deer-skin, with the horns sticking up, and pretended to be browsing on the cliff over the Tartar's bivouac. A soldier, catching sight of him in the starlight, shot an arrow which struck Lee's leg, and prevented him from escaping when the enemy gave chase. He was captured and treated very cruelly, but his life was spared, the Tartars carrying him off and making a slave of him in their own country.

"Years afterward, when Lee had been forgotten in his own town (where he was believed to be long dead), an old man, lame and scarred and pitiful, came limping into the place, and paused beside the paling around what had been Lee's garden. A few hot tears ran down his withered cheeks as he gazed, and a young woman, who was nursing her baby inside the little house, came out and gave him rice and fragrant tea. Strengthened and refreshed, the old fellow went on his way. It was evening before he reached the burial-place whither his footsteps turned. The clouds hung low and black, and the wind moaned, as he dragged himself up the steep path. Around his aged neck hung a garland he had woven with maimed fingers, of flowers of the red azalea begged from the children of the village. When he reached a certain humble tomb, the old man fell upon his knees, laying his gar-

land there, and bowing his head upon his breast in silence.

"Suddenly, lightning ripped through the sky, and thunder crashed, as the heavens loosed their fountains, and a great rain fell.

"'Do not fear, mother, Lee is here; Lee will take care of you,' the old fellow cried out; and, as of old, he tried to laugh and sing to cheer her fright away. When morning came, the neighbors found him there dead, and, too late, recognized Lee, their old friend and gallant soldier. By the Emperor's order, he was given a splendid funeral, and laid to rest beside his parents, having inscribed upon his tomb in golden letters:

"'Lee, the faithful son,' followed by a Chinese proverb, that ran as follows: 'Though the tree be a thousand yards high, the leaf must flutter down to the root.'"

"That is rather too sad a story!" remarked Regi, soberly. His eyes had the veiled look they always wore when anything made him think of his own mamma, and he wished the mandarin had told him something else.

THE AUSTRIAN PAPER-KNIFE'S STORY.

"Did I not hear a little boy complaining the other day over the hard names in his geography lesson?" said a voice from the writing-table so suddenly as to make Regi jump, after the Chinaman had finished.

"Yes," Regi admitted. "I said they were silly, and I could not see the sense of trying to remember them; and Lynchy scolded me."

"Well, I am glad I have a chance to prove to you that it is sometimes worth one's while to set the memory to work in such a matter."

Regi, gazing curiously through the half-darkness of the room, saw that the voice came from a wooden paper-knife, beautifully carved in the likeness of an eagle's feather, that his brother had brought from Austria the year before.

"Go ahead!" he said, settling himself down comfortably into a big chair, with his scarlet-stockinged legs hanging over one arm of it.

"The name of my story is Kruzimügeli; and, first of all, you must learn to pronounce it," said the paper-knife.

Regi gave a soft whistle of astonishment, but obediently repeated the syllables, until he had, after his American fashion, mastered them.

"Pretty well," said the paper-knife. "Now for the story part."

Once upon a time, there was a king who had set his heart upon finding himself a wife who should have night-black hair, and eyes like purple violets. He hunted the kingdom over for a maiden with this peculiar coloring. In vain did the blue-eyed court ladies dye their hair blacker than the raven's wing; the king only shook his head, crying, "Take her away; her eyes are not the right shade." Then the peasant girls came before him; but none suited.

One day, a girl named Mirzl, the daughter of a poor charcoal-burner in the deep forest, heard some huntsmen, passing by, speak of the king's strange fancy. Running to the border of a clear spring, she looked in, and saw there eyes that had exactly the tint of the violets growing around the brim. On either side her pretty face streamed hair in night-black waves. "If his majesty could see *me!*" she whispered, half frightened at her own boldness. Then Mirzl sighed as she thought of her ragged gown and general poverty of aspect.

Out of the woods, at that moment, hopped a queer little man, dressed in green, with a scarlet cap and feather.

"See here, Mirzl," he said, with a grin. "I know what you are thinking about. What would you say if I offered you fine clothes and a carriage to visit the court in?"

Mirzl's eyes sparkled with delight. The dwarf led her for a long walk in the forest, till they reached a tree of enormous girth. On the bark of this tree the little man tapped with his forefinger, and immediately a door flew open, showing inside a room hung with velvet and lace, with a mirror on the wall; and across a chair was thrown a magnificent gown of pure cloth of silver, laced with blue. Beside it lay a cap with light

blue plumes, and in a casket glittered a necklace, ear-drops, bracelets, and several stars of diamonds.

"Try them on," said the dwarf, and he shut Mirzl up in the tree-room till she was ready to come out again, looking like a born princess, you may believe. Her coal-black hair hung in ringlets to the knee; her skin was as fair as a lily; and her eyes were like morning violets before the dew has dried from them.

"Now haste away to the palace," said the dwarf.

Mirzl looked puzzled.

"How can I walk in *this*," she said, pointing to her train. "I shall stumble at every footstep, and the wet grass will soil my dainty silver slippers."

"How easy it is to forget what we come from!" grinned the dwarf. But, at the same time, he blew a whistle, and up came a chariot drawn by four fawns, into which he bade the astonished Mirzl step, to seat herself upon cushions of down.

"Now off with you to the palace!" cried the dwarf.

"How can I ever thank you, kind sir," asked the girl, hardly believing herself to be awake.

"I ask one thing in return," he answered, capering gleefully around on the greensward. "And that is, that if you become the queen, you shall at the end of three years be able to remember my name without making a mistake in it, or else come back with me."

"That's easy enough to do," laughed the confident Mirzl.

"All right, if you think so! It's Kruzimügeli, neither more nor less," he said, speaking so rapidly she could hardly keep up with him. While Mirzl was saying the name over to herself, another whistle blew, off flew the fleet fawns, and they never slacked speed until the palace gates were reached.

The king came out in person to receive the beautiful stranger, with whom he fell desperately in love at sight of her jet-black locks and violet eyes. Mirzl would not tell whence she came, and the people believed her to be a foreign princess; so Princess Mirzl she was styled, until her marriage with the sovereign a few days later, when she became Queen Mirzl.

The new queen was surrounded by every comfort and luxury. She did not forget her father in the forest, but sent him money and gifts from time to time, so that he was able to live in plenty, though he little dreamed his daughter and his king's wife were one and the same person. He believed his child to have wandered into the woods to be eaten by wild beasts.

For nearly three long years all was joy and happiness at court. The queen had a splendid boy; and one day, as she was playing with him in his cradle, a little green mouse ran across her foot.

"Go away, you odd little creature," cried the queen, stamping her foot.

"I *am* an odd creature, since I can talk," responded the mouse, promptly. "I have been sent to speak but one word to your majesty, and that is 'Remember.'"

"Remember what?" screamed Mirzl, and then it flashed across her! But as we all try to put away disagreeable thoughts, she seized the baby, smothered it with kisses, and thought no more of the horrid little mouse.

A week later, as she was riding on horseback beside the king, a green caterpillar fell upon her neck from a bough overhead.

"Take the ugly thing off me, king," she cried, shuddering.

"Never mind, I will go of my own accord," said a

little voice in her ear. "I was sent only to bid your majesty 'Remember.'"

The queen winced, and, when the king asked what ailed her, did not answer. But he noticed that she was unusually quiet and thoughtful on the ride home.

A week later, when the third year was drawing to a close, the queen went with her maidens to walk between alleys of roses in the garden. As she stooped to pluck a posy, a little green toad hopped upon her hand. With a start she threw aside the toad, but not before it too spoke to her as the mouse and the caterpillar had done.

"I am sent to bid your majesty 'Remember.'"

This time the queen turned pale, and fell into a fainting fit. The maids of honor ran in all directions for water, smelling-salts, burnt feathers and the like, while the poor queen came gradually to herself in the arbor where they had placed her.

"Oh! miserable being that I am!" she lamented. "Not a syllable can I remember of the green dwarf's hateful name, though I have tried and tried. Three days more, and the year will be complete. I shall no doubt be carried away from my husband and my child. Alas! Alas!"

She wept so that the tears ran in two bright rivulets adown her cheeks. When the king came running up with the maids of honor, he comforted her by every means in his power, but the queen would not tell the cause of her sorrow. She shut herself up in the palace; and although the king instituted magnificent festivals in her honor, refused to go to the windows to look out at them.

That night, as the king's chief forester went into the

woods to search for game for the royal table, he was pondering, as did everybody in the kingdom, over the extraordinary melancholy of their beloved queen. Suddenly, a fine buck ran by, and plunged into the thicket. Following it, the forester was led into a portion of the forest that seemed entirely new to him. At the end of a close-woven alley of vines and undergrowth, the buck plunged, as it seemed, into the earth. The forester saw before him an opening, between rocks fringed with ferns and trailing myrtle that almost covered them from sight. Lifting aside this natural curtain, he beheld, within, an amphitheatre of green turf, surrounded by walls of rock. In the middle of it, a fire was burning, and a pot was bubbling merrily. To feed the fire, a little man clad in green, wearing a scarlet cap and feather, was fetching sticks ; around it were grouped a toad, a caterpillar, and a mouse, all of a green color, sitting erect in an attitude of attention, while on the moss lay the buck, out of breath with his long run.

"What news do you bring?" asked the dwarf of the panting buck.

"I have had to fly for my life, master," said the buck. "The king's forester was after me."

"In a day or two you will have nothing to fear from the king," grinned the green dwarf. "For when I have secured queen Mirzl as my prize, it is my intention to seal up the opening yonder, and to live here with her and with you, my faithful servants, for ever more. But quick ! What of pretty Mirzl ? Does she seem in better spirits, perchance ?"

"The queen still keeps her room, and she has cried a fountain full," answered the buck.

"Good," said the dwarf, who forthwith began jump-

ing over the fire and back, singing to himself the following curious words.

"The queen forgets—what luck for me
That I am Kruzimügeli!"

And the toad, and the caterpillar and the mouse, sang in chorus:

"The queen forgets—what luck for thee,
That thou art Kruzimügeli."

While the buck rolled out in a deep bass voice:

"The queen forgets—soon shall she be
The bride of Kruzimügeli."

Storing this strange sight and these words carefully in his mind, the forester stole noiselessly away and tried to retrace his footsteps into the more familiar part of the wood. But so far had he strayed, and so thoroughly had he lost the way, that for two days and nights, he wandered aimlessly, depending on nuts and berries for subsistence. The third day he came upon a path he knew, and made all speed for the palace, which he found draped in black, the king and queen sitting like images of woe in the council chamber and the courtiers gathered around them.

Before the royal pair stood the green dwarf, and as the forester crept into the hall making his way to the back of the throne where he hid behind the queen, the dwarf was saying in a terrible voice:

"For the first time I ask you, Queen Mirzl; can you remember my name?"

The king and all the court looked anxiously at the queen, who was pale and trembling.

"Is it Steffel?" asked the queen, at last.

"Missed!" cried the dwarf, leaping high in the air for joy.

A silence followed, and the dwarf spoke again.

"For the second time I ask you, Queen Mirzl, can you remember my name?"

The king leaned forward, and the court seemed to hang upon the queen's words in reply.

"Is it—is it Beitle?" asked poor Mirzl, in faintest accents.

"Missed again!" shouted the dwarf, with a higher bound into the air.

And now the king and the court gave every sign of alarm and distress; for on the queen's third guess everything depended. All knew that if she failed in that, she was compelled to keep her pledge to the green dwarf, and to go back with him.

"For the third and last time I ask you, Queen Mirzl, do you remember my name?"

There was dead silence in the hall, broken only by the half-suppressed sobs of the court-ladies. The king was as pale as death, and the queen seemed ready to faint.

"Try Kruzimügeli;" came in a whisper from behind her chair, a whisper so low that only the queen could hear it.

Instantly, a flash of memory told her that this was right. The blood rushed into her cheeks, and in a clear, firm voice, Mirzl cried out.

"The queen remembers—thou art he
Whose name is *Kruzimügeli!*"

At this the dwarf gave a snort of rage, and fire flashed from his eyes and nostrils. With a single tremendous bound he dashed up into the air, and through the

ceiling of the council-hall, leaving a breach there that no mason's skill could repair.

The king and queen fell into each other's arms, and the courtiers cried for joy. That evening was held the most splendid festival ever seen, in honor of the queen's deliverance from the powers of evil.

"I'm not likely to forget Kruzemügeli," said Regi; "but it seems to me there is something like that in Grimm. Don't you remember Rumpelstiltikin?"

"I don't know what you mean by Grimm," said the paper-knife, stiffly; "I tell you the tale as 'twas told to me by a peasant near Reichenau, in Lower Austria, where I was carved. If I have altered it a little, it may be because I was so saturated with other folk-tales and tobacco smoke during the long months of waiting before I was sent for sale to summer tourists, my memory has become confused. I can't say you are very polite to criticise it to my face, however."

"I beg your pardon," cried Regi, quickly. "Don't think I didn't enjoy it. There's everything in the way of telling, you know."

"Well, there's another—a short story I heard my master's wife tell once which you may fancy," replied the paper-knife, in a more pleasant tone. "It is called the Three Caskets, and is about a girl named Anna Maria. This too, belongs to our part of the world, and is told by the peasant women to their children, in order to make them behave with civility to strangers."

One day Anna Maria was sent by her mother to fetch water from a spring. On the road she met an

old beggar who asked her for food and drink. Anna Maria took from her pocket a good bit of brown bread that was to serve for her midday meal, and gave him the larger share, together with a drink of sparkling water from her jug.

"I am going on a long journey," said the old man, "and am very tired of carrying these three heavy caskets you see strapped upon my back. I have resolved to leave them with you, and if, at the end of three years I shall not have claimed them again, you may keep what you find within. But beware of opening them before three years are out."

Unstrapping his burden, he laid three plain wooden boxes on the grass at Anna Maria's feet; and while the girl was still wondering, he disappeared, walking as lightly as a youth of twenty.

Anna Maria hid the caskets under a rubbish heap in the granary, so much afraid was she of yielding to the temptation of opening them then and there. At the end of a year, her parents died, and she was thrown upon the cold charity of strangers. A peasant took their house, and his wife retained Anna Maria as a sort of drudge. Morning and night found her hard at work, scrubbing, dusting, cooking, milking, churning, digging in the garden patch, and feeding the cattle. Two years later, you would hardly have recognized poor Anna Maria, so old and bent and miserable she looked. In vain she begged the peasant and his wife to set her free. She had been bound to them by law for five years, and they found their drudge too useful to part with.

"Go to your spinning," cried the angry woman. "And when you can spin me a thread as fine as a cobweb, and made of purest silver, then I will set you free, and not before."

It now occurred to Anna Maria, that the three years set by the old man had passed away without his coming to claim his property. So one day she climbed up the ladder into the granary, and uncovered the three boxes, by this time an inch deep in dust. When she opened the first casket, oh joy! there lay a skein of pure silver thread, hundreds of yards long, and finer than a cobweb. She seized the pretty, glistening thing, and ran with it to her mistress.

"See what I have brought you to buy my freedom with," she cried, a ray of hope shining in her dim eyes.

Her mistress snatched the skein with eager fingers, while her covetous spirit whispered: "Keep the girl, for she may prove a mine of wealth to you."

"Not till you have woven me a web of linen, fifty ells broad, that may be passed through my wedding ring," said the spiteful dame, and poor Anna Maria retired weeping to her work.

Next day she opened the second casket, to find there a garment of linen, finer than was ever dreamed of by the queen's wardrobe women. With trembling hands, she bore it to her mistress, who passed it through her wedding ring with ease.

"Never will I set you free, girl," exclaimed the woman, "until you build me a castle of glass that shall reach the highest tree top in the forest."

She then beat Anna Maria and sent her away crying, determining in her wicked heart to hold on to her, hoping to secure untold riches through the poor child's agency.

Anna Maria went into the granary, fully resolved to run away, as it was of no use to bestow upon her mistress the contents of the third box, whatever they

might prove to be. To satisfy herself, however, she carried the box out into the wood, and, in a secluded glen, opened the lid to peep in. Out came a dome of glass like a soap bubble, rising into the air, till at length a complete castle of glass, higher than the highest tree top, stood before her. The mistress, who, suspecting mischief, had followed Anna Maria into the woods, now rushed from behind a tree. Nothing would content her but to go up the castle stairs; and, bidding the girl stay below, she climbed the shining staircase to the crystal dome on top. Here her foot slipped and she fell through an open window to the ground below, breaking her neck and dying instantly.

When she saw that her mistress did not return, Anna Maria resolved herself to mount the stairway. Higher, higher she went, and at the very summit she met a beautiful young prince in white and silver, who took her by the hand.

"I am the old traveller you helped," he said; "and I have waited all this time to test your fidelity to a promise. Now shall you be my bride, and this castle and its contents are your own."

He touched Anna Maria with his right forefinger, and immediately her youthful beauty came back, while her rags and tatters were transformed into splendid raiment. They were married at once, and lived in the crystal castle for many years, in perfect love and peace.

"You are something like a paper-knife!" Regi said, and the paper-knife agreed with him.

"Out came a dome of glass like a soap-bubble, rising into the air."

THE STORY OF THE MOORISH DISH.

In a dusky corner of the room, upon a curtain of antique tapestry, hung a queer basin-shaped dish, made of rude pottery and decorated with grotesque birds and figures of a lustrous copper tint.

"Well, if I couldn't draw a better bird than that," pondered Regi, gazing up at it, "I'd sell out. It's regular scribbling, that's what it is."

"You are an ignorant little boy," stiffly remarked the dish; "I would have you to know, sir, that I was secured by your father not long since, at a very high price, as a genuine specimen of Hispano-Moresco faïence——"

"Say! Talk something a fellow can understand, won't you?" shouted Regi.

The pretentious old plaque shuddered until it might have cracked, but for the folds of tapestry supporting it.

"I am supposed to be the work of the ancient Moors of Spain," it resumed presently. "My glaze, as any one who knows can tell, marks me as belonging to the fifteenth century. I am an interesting relic of a race of people, now scattered and passed away, but who once reigned with royal splendor among the nations of Europe, and the earth. In A.D. 756, Abd-er-Rhama having expelled his Mohamedan predecessors, established his——"

"Gracious! it's just like a history-lesson," exclaimed Regi, gloomily. "Please, won't you skip dates and all

that? Just say where you came from, and hurry up with the story."

"It is plain to see that I am throwing away my efforts," replied the affronted dish, glowering darkly. "All the treasures of my experience scorned by a vulgar little boy! This is what comes of condescending to live in the house of an upstart American, a man of yesterday,—I—whose birthplace was among kings."

"Well, if it comes to calling names," returned Regi, "only to-day, I heard papa tell Fred that you are very doubtful and cannot be relied upon. And Fred said, that, though you are a showy old thing, you began life by being nothing better than a barber's basin in a little Spanish town——"

The plaque's face burnt up at this, so as to make an illumination on the wall. It was really quite gorgeous to behold. After a discreet silence, during which Regi had a quiet giggle to himself, the dish spoke again, in a more amiable voice.

"I lived in Granada, near the Alhambra, which, as you no doubt know, is a palace of the old Moorish sovereigns of Spain. In that part of the world, every breeze that blows after sunset brings a story to the ear, and there is a tradition for almost every stone of the streets and court-yards."

"Come, now, that's something like," cried Regi, sitting up, attentive.

"Well, I will tell you one of those stories."

At the entrance of a certain vaulted passage-way of the Alhambra, stand two statues of nymphs in pure white marble, their eyes turned in the same direction, looking within the vault. The story I am going to tell

you relates to these statues, and to the fortunes of a merry little gardener, who worked in the grounds of the Alhambra. His name was Lope Sanchez. He had for a wife a strapping buxom dame, who could almost have put him in her pocket; and they rejoiced in a pretty little dark-eyed daughter called Sanchica. Sanchica ran about the palace and gardens like a young fawn, and in the evening danced boleros and fandangos to the tunes of her father's guitar.

Once, on the eve of St. John, when bonfires were kindled around the neighboring mountain tops, and the moon shone silver-bright upon the scene, Sanchica, gathering pebbles in the ruin of an old Moorish fort near by, found a tiny hand curiously carved, of jet, and ran at once to show her prize to her mother. An old soldier who had served in Africa and knew all about the Moors, now drew near, and informed them that the hand was undoubtedly a talisman that would bring good luck to the Sanchez family. So, much delighted, Sanchica's mother tied the hand of jet to a ribbon, and hung it around her child's neck.

Soon after, Sanchica wandered off, and found herself in the neighborhood of a pit, about which many strange stories had been told. The country people believed it to be haunted by hobgoblins; and not for all the money in Granada could one of them have been induced to peep into this pit after nightfall. Sanchica was a fearless little thing, and boldly she ventured to the edge and looked in. All below was black as pitch, and no man could tell how deep it was. Sanchica shuddered, but, gaining courage, rolled a large stone and pushed it over the brink. For some time she heard nothing, then came a noise like thunder, and a mighty splash far, far beneath; then all again was silent.

Suddenly arose a murmuring sound like the distant hum of bees. This grew louder and louder, there was a confusion of voices as of an awakening multitude, together with the din of arms, the clash of cymbals and clang of trumpets. It was as if an army were about to issue from beneath the mountain.

Terrified, Sanchica turned to fly ; but alas ! she had lost her way. For a time she wandered about under the trees ; and, at last, sitting down to rest, she heard the bell from the watch-tower of the Alhambra toll midnight. Immediately there issued from the mountain side a glittering train of Moorish warriors. Some were armed with lances and shields, others with scimitars and battle-axes. Their horses pranced proudly, but not a sound was heard. It was as if they had been shod with felt. Among the soldiers rode a beautiful lady with a crown set upon her long golden locks. The housings of her horse were of crimson velvet embroidered with gold. She was pale as death, and her eyes were never lifted from the ground.

After her rode a train of splendidly dressed courtiers. Among them, on a magnificent cream-colored horse, was the King Boabdil el Chico, dressed in a royal mantle covered with jewels, and wearing a crown sparkling with diamonds. Sanchica well knew him for this famous king, for many a time she had looked at his portrait in the gallery of the Generalife.

Holding with one hand her sacred talisman, the little girl arose and followed the beautiful procession. It passed on to the great gate of Justice, which, to her surprise, stood wide open. Sanchica would have gone further, but just here she saw an opening in the earth beneath the foundations of the tower. Something tempted her to enter for a little distance, and presently

she found steps, hewn from the rock, leading into a vaulted passage lit by silver lamps. Venturing on, she came at last to a grand hall, hollowed out of the very centre of the mountain, splendidly furnished in the old Moorish style, and lighted by lamps of silver and crystal. Here, on an ottoman, dozed an old Moor with a long white beard, and at a little distance from him sat a beautiful damsel, her hair worn under a coronet of sparkling diamonds, and her jewelled fingers playing upon a silver lute.

At sight of Sanchica, the lady started with surprise.

"Is it the eve of the blessed St. John?" she asked.

"It is," answered Sanchica, timidly.

"Then for one night, the powers of magic cannot harm. Come here, my child, and touch my fetters with the talisman that hangs around your neck, and for a time I shall be free."

So saying, she showed the little maiden where she was chained to the rock by a heavy chain of gold. Sanchica quickly touched the links with her talisman and they fell to the ground. At sound of the falling chain, the old magician started up, but, running her fingers over the silver lute, the lady soon lulled him to sleep again.

"Touch his staff with your talisman," directed the lady; and when Sanchica obeyed, the old man slumbered heavily.

"Now follow me, my child," said the lady, "and you shall see the Alhambra as it was in the days of all its glory."

Following her guide, Sanchica saw many a sight that filled her with astonishment and delight. The courts of the palace were filled with Moorish soldiers, horse and foot; and at the doors were splendid guards, with rows

upon rows of African blacks with drawn scimitars. Could this be the old ruined palace in whose gardens Sanchica had grown up, playing and romping fearlessly? Instead of cobwebs on the stained walls, there now hung rich silks of Damascus, and the ceilings were gay with gilded ornaments. The once bare halls and rooms were filled with furniture of the rarest sort, divans and ottomans embroidered with pearls and gems. All the fountains in the courts and gardens were shooting up jets of water; the kitchens were in full blast; cooks were busy roasting pullets and partridges; servants hurried to and fro with silver dishes heaped with dainties. Tables were set with a delicious banquet. Within the hall of Judgment, King Boabdil sat again upon his throne, that for so many centuries had been empty. Little Sanchica could hardly believe her eyes, but she said not a word until the lady stopped at a portal where stood two statues of nymphs commanding silence.

"Here, child," whispered the enchanted lady, "look at the spot where the eyes of both these statues gaze, and tell your father that, if he searches there for treasure, he will find what will make him the richest man in all Granada. But tell him that, by your innocent hands alone, holding your talisman, can the treasure be moved. And now my hour is come. I must return to enchantment. Do not follow me, lest harm come to you. Only remember, that part of the gold you find must be spent in saying daily masses for my deliverance from this unholy spell."

So saying, the lady plucked a branch of myrtle from a bush growing in the courtyard near by, and, stooping, wreathed with it Sanchica's hair. At that moment a cock was heard crowing far away in the valley, and a

"So saying, the lady plucked a branch of myrtle from a bush."

streak of rosy light appeared above the mountains to the east. A wind arose, and there was a sound as if dry leaves were rustling through courts and corridors. Sanchica found herself outside the palace in the path to her own home. Soon she had regained her humble cottage ; and, creeping unnoticed into bed, she hid the myrtle wreath beneath her pillow and fell asleep to dream of many wonders.

Next day, when Lope Sanchez was at work in the garden, Sanchica told him the story of her adventures, to be heartily laughed at, in return. Not a word of it would her father believe, till she came running out to him in triumph with the myrtle wreath in hand ; but lo ! every leaf of it was a sparkling emerald, and the stalk was of purest gold !

At this, Lope Sanchez became greatly excited ; and together he and Sanchica repaired to the hall of the statues. Observing that the eyes of both nymphs were fixed on the same spot in the inside of the hall, Sanchez drew a line from the eyes of the statues to the point of regard, and made a private mark upon the wall before going away.

Late that night, when there was no one to espy them, Lope Sanchez and Sanchica returned to the hall of statues. Setting to work to open the wall at the spot he had marked, the little man soon brought to view a concealed niche where stood two great porcelain jars. Attempting to draw them forth, he found that they could not be moved ; but when Sanchica touched them with her talisman they became light as feathers, although filled to the brim with pieces of Moorish gold, mingled with jewels and precious stones. Before daylight, he had managed to restore the wall to its original appearance, and to convey his treasure home in safety.

And now, Lope Sanchez was filled with anxiety as to how he should take care of his treasure. One thing was certain, nobody should be taken into his confidence, except his faithful wife. When Dame Sanchez heard the news, she nearly went out of her wits for joy. Certainly, it was hardly worth her husband's while to warn her not to tell anybody! Who ever heard of her repeating a secret confided to her charge? But while these good people were rejoicing in their fortune, Dame Sanchez received a visit from her father confessor, Fray Simon; and, as in Spain a woman hides nothing from her confessor, this good man was soon informed of the family event.

The friar opened his eyes and mouth in astonishment. Ere long, he convinced the poor woman that her husband had committed a double sin in what he had done: first, in helping himself to a treasure that should by rights have gone to the king, and secondly, by giving none of it to the holy Church. However, the matter might be accommodated. Let Dame Sanchez fetch the myrtle wreath for him to see.

Ah! how the friar's eyes sparkled with joy. He knew the value of the emeralds, and he desired above all things to have the glory of laying this treasure before the shrine of his chapel. So he told the woman that her husband should be pardoned only in consideration of giving this offering to the Church. The good dame, eager to shelter her husband, consented, and the friar, tucking the wreath under his mantle, took his leave.

When Lope Sanchez came home and heard what had passed, he was very angry, telling his wife she had put all their wealth in danger by her tattling. However, the mischief was done, and next day, while Lope San-

chez was at his work, back came Fray Simon with a very long face.

"What is the matter?" cried the dame.

"Ah! daughter, I am sorry to tell that the Church is not satisfied with a little paltry wreath," said he. "We must have a purse full of Moorish gold pieces too, before your husband's sin can be forgiven."

"Is that all?" cried the dame, much relieved. So she ran and filled a leather purse with gold and slipped it into the friar's itching palm. Next day and the next back came the friar, each time demanding more, till Lope Sanchez made up his mind that the only way to keep his treasure was to run away with it, taking his family and removing to a distant part of the country, where he might enjoy life unobserved by friars.

For this purpose, he secured a stout mule and a pack-saddle large enough to hold all his gold and jewels. In order that no one might suspect him, the mule was hidden in one of the underground vaults of the palace, where most people were afraid to go, through fear of the goblin horse, Belludo, whom they all believed to haunt the spot. No one had ever seen Belludo, but the story went that any mortal attempting to get a ride upon his back would be dashed to pieces in the effort. Lope Sanchez took care to tie his pack-mule laden with treasure in the very stall said to be haunted by Belludo, well knowing that any prying person who chanced to see it there would keep at a respectful distance.

Now, it came to pass that on the evening of the night when Lope Sanchez proposed to escape with his wife and child and treasure, poor Dame Sanchez could not rest in peace without confiding to her confessor the secret of the intended flight. With many groans and tears at thought of betraying her husband's cher-

ished schemes, she revealed all to Fray Simon, who gave her his blessing in short order, and went off to meditate.

That a prize like this should escape the Mother-Church, was a thing not to be thought of! Fray Simon, though not without qualms of fear at the idea of a possible meeting with the terrible goblin steed, resolved to visit the vaults himself, before the hour fixed for Lope Sanchez to depart. An hour before midnight, the worthy friar stole into the vaults, crept up to the stall where Dame Sanchez had told him the pack-mule was to be found, and, summoning all his courage, jumped astride a steed who stood, as it were, patiently awaiting a rider.

What was Fray Simon's astonishment when the steed, laying back his ears with an angry neigh, bounded out of the stall with the speed of the wind and was off in a mad gallop across the country-side. Up hill, down dale, rearing, kicking, plunging, now bounding as high as a house, now plunging forward till the friar lay flat upon his mane, the furious beast rushed on. All through the livelong night, until cock-crow gave the signal of returning day, the friar was jolted and pounded and torn with briars, till he ached in every bone of his respectable body. Just when the first streak of daylight appeared in the sky, the goblin steed kicked up his heels, sent the friar a somersault through the air, then plunged into the dark vault beneath the palace, and was seen no more. No doubt of it, Fray Simon had been riding the terrible Belludo!

Scarcely able to crawl home, the poor man reached his cell. His first care was to search for the myrtle wreath and purses of gold pieces, coaxed from Dame Sanchez. What was his dismay at finding the wreath

turned to a withered branch of myrtle, the leathern pouches filled with sand and gravel !

The same night that this exciting adventure befell Fray Simon, Lope Sanchez, his wife and Sanchica disappeared. Nothing was heard of them for a long time afterward, or until an old friend of Sanchez, happening to be at Malaga, was nearly run over by a coach-and-six. The carriage stopped. Out of it jumped a little old gentleman round as a barrel, and magnificently dressed. Who should this prove to be but Lope Sanchez, and he was in the act of celebrating the marriage of Sanchica to one of the grandees of the land. The carriage contained the bridal party. There was Dame Sanchez, as round as her husband, and dressed out with feathers and jewels, and necklaces of pearls and diamonds, and a ring for every finger ; while Sanchica, grown to be a beautiful young woman, sat beside her bridegroom—smiling sweetly.

When Lope Sanchez recognized his old comrade in the man he had so nearly run over, he loaded him with presents and with kindnesses, and sent him home rejoicing, with a bag of money for himself and another for his ancient mess-mates of the Alhambra. It was given out that Lope had inherited his money from a rich brother, who had died in America, leaving him a copper mine. But to this day, the gossips of the Alhambra insist that Lope was the discoverer of the treasure so long guarded by the two marble nymphs. As to Fray Simon, no one could ever get him to say much on the subject of his midnight ride on the goblin steed Belludo.

"Well, really," said Regi, in an admiring tone, "you have told a splendid story after all, old dish ; and I'm

sorry I was so cross about it. I don't believe there's any fellow that could beat you telling stories."

"There *is* one," said the dish, evidently flattered. "He, in fact, may go so far as to lay claim to having first introduced this legend to the world of book-readers. But, of course, when you are helped by spirits—and I don't suppose anybody will deny that Irving was a wizard—the advantage is naturally on his side."

"I wish you could tell me another Spanish tale," said Regi, "but I suppose it's against the rule."

"I can," said a voice from the wall. Regi looked up. Under the gold encrusted jacket of a Spanish bull-fighter, hung a short sword with a richly inlaid handle of shell and metal.

THE STORY OF THE TOREADOR'S SWORD.

"If you are going to tell me about the bulls goring those poor horses, or about the men stabbing those poor bulls, I don't believe I should fancy it," said Regi, doubtfully.

"It is only in our own country that they know how to appreciate our—ahem! profession," returned the sword, in a cutting tone. "Why, my young friend, in Madrid, I and my master were the idols of the populace. When we appeared in public, we created more of a sensation than does the king himself. And yet we were not proud. At home, now, in his own cottage in the suburbs, my master was the jolliest fellow in the world. With his pockets always full of money and his breast covered with decorations, he would sit talking in a friendly way with any street lounger who might choose to drop in upon him. No! the story I bethought me of had no reference to our glorious national sport. I heard it from the lips of a blind beggar, to whom my master gave a handful of silver once, if he would make an idle hour pass pleasantly for a group of merry fellows. It was this:"

In a hut by the sea lived a cobbler, whose customers dropped one by one away from him, while his neighbor,

the fisherman, drove a thriving trade. "I'll not stand this," says the cobbler, who forthwith spends his last penny on a net, and sets out for the water-side, determined to try his luck. Three times did he cast his net, and three times, as if in mockery, he drew in nothing but old boots and shoes.

"I'll cast a fourth time," said he, "and if I catch nothing, I shall go and hang myself." A fourth time he cast, and in a little while his net felt heavy. Full of hope, he hauled it in. To his joy, there lay a fine fish shining like silver in the meshes.

"Take me home," said the fish, "cut me in six pieces, stew me with salt and pepper, cinnamon, cloves, laurel leaves and mint. When I have come to a gentle simmer, give two pieces to your wife, two to your mare, and plant the other two in your garden. If luck don't come of it, I shall be very much surprised."

The cobbler obeyed directions, and what should happen but that his wife soon presented him with two beautiful sons, his mare had two fine colts, and out of his garden there sprang two tall plants that bore, instead of fruit, two shields, showing each a silver fish upon an azure ground.

In six months time, the boys had grown to be stalwart knights; and, mounted upon the colts, now superb war horses, they determined to seek their fortunes, carrying the shields upon their arms, and with lances in their hands. Embracing each other affectionately, one took his way toward the East, the other to the West.

"Don't expect to see us again till we have won fame and fortune," were their parting words to their parents, who stood and looked after them with pride, as the two knights galloped off.

After travelling for some days across the country, the first knight reached Madrid, where he found the whole city plunged in grief. Everybody was shedding tears enough to swell the current of the beautiful river, and, on asking the cause of such sorrow, the youth was told that every year a fiery dragon came to carry off one of their fairest maidens. This year, the lot had fallen upon the king's own daughter, the sweetest and loveliest princess that ever was heard of, and the darling of the people.

"And where is the princess, now?" asked the knight, at once fired with zeal to rescue her.

"Oh! she is already on the fatal spot, awaiting the monster," cried the people. "It is beneath an olive-tree, about a league from the town on the western road. Ride fast, good knight, and Heaven speed you!"

When the youth came in sight of the olive-tree, he saw the princess sitting beneath it, bathed in tears and trembling from head to foot. She was the prettiest creature he had ever looked upon, with cheeks like pomegranates, and locks of jet. Her robe was of cloth-of-gold that sparkled at a distance, and around her waist she wore a girdle of diamonds each as large as a chestnut.

"Fly, rash knight!" cried the princess, when she espied him. "I am instantly expecting the dragon; and if he sees you, you must die."

"I fear him not, fair lady," said the knight of the silver fish, "for I have come to save you."

"To save me! That is impossible!"

"We shall see!" answered the gallant knight; and, reversing his shield, he displayed a surface brighter than any glass mirror. This he fastened to the trunk

of the tree against which the princess leant, covering it with her veil.

"When the dragon draws near," he told her, "spring behind the shield, and draw the veil away from it. The rest leave to me and to my trusty lance."

The knight hid himself, and the princess did as she was bid. Presently, up came the dragon, his scales rattling, his eyes flashing real fire, his nostrils breathing steam. Just as he was prepared to dart upon the lady, she slipped behind the shield and whisked away her veil from its brilliant surface. What was the astonishment of the dragon? He saw, as he supposed, another monster exactly like himself.

"What other dragon has had the audacity to come after my princess?" he roared in a furious voice, at once attacking his image, tooth and claw. As far as he could see, his enemy fought as well as himself. When he opened his eyes to shoot forth fire, the enemy did likewise. When he gnashed his horrible teeth, the other dragon did the same. Enraged at being thus mocked, the distracted beast dashed his head with all his might against his enemy, shivering the polished steel to fragments. But now, instead of one opponent, he saw a dozen. Every broken piece of the shield reflected a separate monster. Terrified out of his wits, he crouched panting on the ground, and the knight springing upon him from behind the tree, drove his lance through the creature's brain, killing him upon the spot.

You may imagine the delight of the good people of Madrid when they saw the knight of the silver fish ride back into their city, bearing behind him, her lovely arms clasped round his waist, their beloved princess, safe and well, and dragging at his saddle-bow the bloody carcass of their enemy the dragon.

"Terrified out of his wits, he crouched panting on the ground."

The king received the young couple with rapture, and immediately rewarded the knight by bestowing on him his daughter's hand in marriage. For a week, the city of Madrid was as remarkable for gayety as it had formerly been for sorrow. All day there were shows and bull-fights, and all night the people danced in the moonlight, over streets strewn with flowers, to the music of guitar and castanets. The Prince, as he was now styled, was perfectly happy.

About a week after the marriage, he went with his wife upon the highest battlement of the palace to view the surrounding landscape.

"What is that lonely-looking castle I see far away in the distance yonder?" asked the Prince.

"Don't look in that direction, pray!" cried the princess; "or you will be wanting to run again into danger. In that castle enchantment reigns supreme. No one who was ever rash enough to go there, has returned again. I beseech you turn away, and let us talk of something pleasanter."

The Prince appeared to think no more about it, but his ambition to solve the mystery hanging around the lonely castle grew every day more strong. At last, rising early one morning, he spurred his horse in the direction of the spot all others chose to avoid.

The castle stood upon frowning rocks, and a more gloomy place could not be pictured. Not a sign of life was at door or window. The silence of death hung over it. At the portal was a horn, over the mouth of which cobwebs had formed. Seizing this, the Prince blew a lusty blast. Immediately, there arose echoes coming from every part of the castle and sounding like mournful voices.

"Open the door to a knight who has come your way," he shouted.

"Away! away! away!" warned the echoes.

"This is a hospitable welcome," said the Prince. "But threaten as you will, I'm determined to get inside. Do you hear what I cry?"

"Ay! ay! ay!" answered the echoes.

"Then send somebody to open this door, be it serving man or lass."

"Alas! alas! alas!" cried the echoes.

The Prince struck impatiently upon the portal with his spear. Thereupon the portcullis was raised, and under it appeared the face of a hideous old crone.

"What do you want, impudence?" cried she, in a cracked voice.

"I want to come in," answered the Prince. "Will you give me refreshment and house-room while I rest after my journey? Answer yes or no."

"No, no, no," warned the echoes.

The crone said nothing, but after a short time, smiled a malicious smile, inviting the youth to enter by a nod.

"Then you have made up your mind to be hospitable?" said the Prince, pleasantly.

"Never fear but you shall fare well," answered she.

"Farewell, farewell, farewell," sighed the echoes.

"Might I ask your name, madam?" pursued the Prince, as he followed his hostess within.

By this time they were out of hearing of the alarming echoes, whose mournful wail "farewell" had depressed him more than he chose to allow even to himself. The crone grinned an affectionate smile which was even more horrible than her frown, as she locked and barred the portal after him.

"I am the Duchess Serpentosa," she said; "and you have come just in time to be my twenty-fourth hus-

band. Somehow or other the air of this castle does not agree with my husbands, but luckily travellers are not lacking, now and then."

"Never will I be your husband, dame," said the Prince, stoutly, thinking of his pretty young wife at home, who was even now expecting him. "And what is more, I call on you to surrender the people I believe you have unjustly imprisoned here."

The Duchess Serpentosa's eyes flashed angrily, but muttering something between her teeth, she invited the Prince to walk around the castle, and see for himself what it contained. Deceived by her apparent submission, the Prince followed. When they had visited many rich and splendid rooms where nobody was found within, they came to a narrow passage leading to the rear of the castle.

"Do you pass before me, Prince," said wily Serpentosa. "The way is a trifle dark here, and I am afraid of stumbling."

The Prince, suspecting nothing, led the way. As he put his foot upon an iron grating it gave way, plunging him into a deep abyss, where, in a damp and noisome vault underground, he found many other gallant knights and noblemen, whose voices were the warning echoes he had heard. In this cruel way, the Duchess Serpentosa had punished every one of these cavaliers, each of whom in turn had despised her offer of her hand. Every day bread and water enough to keep them alive were lowered by a cord; and most of the time she amused herself by taunting them from the brink of their living tomb.

"If you had married me, you might have had your share of this fun, Prince," she said mockingly, from above. "Stay there, now, until you waste to a skele-

ton. You shall never see your pretty bride again, I'll promise you."

We will now leave this sad scene for a while to see what became of the second knight of the silver fish. After parting from his brother, he rode throughout the country, doing many valiant deeds, and winning great renown for himself, until he finally arrived at the gates of the city of Madrid.

Here he found guards in waiting, who, saluting him respectfully as their prince, informed him that scouts had been out searching for him night and day since his disappearance, and that the poor princess was nearly distracted at his absence.

"For whom do they mistake me?" said the knight of the silver fish. "Surely, it can be for no one but my brother, who resembles me so exactly that our own mother does not know us apart. Well! I shall keep my own counsel, and perhaps I may in this way be able to arrive at a scheme for restoring my lost brother to his bride."

So he let himself be welcomed as the prince, and no one knew the difference until he came to the room where the princess was awaiting him with open arms. Just as she was about to embrace him fondly, she looked earnestly into his eyes and, faltering, whispered:

"I am deceived. You are not my husband."

As they were alone, he promptly told her all, and vowed that he would restore his brother or perish in the attempt.

"There is no hope," said the weeping princess. "Your brother is a peerless knight, and if he has fallen into the power of that wicked Serpentosa, no man can escape her."

But the knight bid her be of good cheer, and at once set out for the enchanted castle. He was received, like his brother, by mournful warnings from the echoes; and presently, vizor-down, he stood in the presence of the wicked Serpentosa.

"Who are you? Show me your face!" said the witch.

The knight lifted his vizor, and the hag gave a scream of terror. She believed him to be her latest victim, escaped from captivity in the vault where she had cast him.

"How came you here again?" she faltered. "Can it be that my spells have lost their power?"

"As surely as that your end has come, you foul sorceress!" exclaimed the knight, lifting his lance, and piercing her to the heart. As witches, like snakes, cannot die till after sunset, Serpentosa lingered long enough to tell him where her prisoners were confined. The knight rushing to the grating of the dungeon, was hailed from below with cries of rapture and delight; but alas! he found it utterly impossible to move the grating, which was sealed by enchantment. Hearing this, the Duchess Serpentosa laughed in fiendish glee.

"There is only one way in which you can get it open," she said, in a feeble voice, "and that is, through bringing back my strength. Go into the garden and pluck some everlastings, and some leaves of the plant called dragon's blood, and boil them. By sprinkling me with the liquid thus obtained, you can restore me, but hurry, as I am at death's door."

The knight complied with her directions, and presently Serpentosa was up on her feet again, though uglier than ever. She led the way to the grating, and by the

exercise of her magic power opened it, bringing up to the light of day her hapless victims. One by one they came, white and wasted to skeletons ; and last of all appeared the Prince. As they reached the upper air, each in turn fell into a death-like trance upon the floor.

"Much good may they do you," shrieked the hag, spitefully, as she prepared to fly away upon a broomstick.

But the knight of the silver fish was too quick for her. Seizing her with one hand in a grasp of iron, he sprinkled the prostrate victims with what remained of the life-restoring fluid. Immediately they all sprang to their feet and, forming a ring around their wicked tyrant, lost no time in hacking her to pieces. With one consent, they voted that the castle should be set on fire with all that it contained. This was done, and the train of knights and courtiers, headed by the two brothers, set out for Madrid. No need to tell of the rejoicing that greeted them !

Of all the people in the town, the princess alone could distinguish her husband from his brother, but she recognized her beloved Prince without a moment's hesitation. A carriage-and-six with outriders, and chests containing gorgeous garments, were despatched to the cottage of the cobbler and his wife, who soon after arrived at the capital, looking and acting like grandees of the bluest blood of Spain. A feast was spread in the public square that went on for a week ; and the poor people ate so much they had no appetites for months to come.

"And what else ?" said Regi, smacking his lips.

"Oh ! nothing else," said the bull-fighter's sword.

"I suppose, as you are so mealy-mouthed, you didn't like to have that witch killed?"

"Didn't I, though?" answered Regi. "You may kill as many witches and dragons as you please; you can't scare me. It's only real things, I mind. I'm sorry Spain is done."

THE WALRUS TOOTH'S STORY.

"I SHOULD like to hear from you next," Regi said, lifting up a curious-looking drinking-cup, made of a walrus tooth, carved and set in bands of beaten silver.

"I will tell you a legend of the far, far north," said the walrus tooth. "It is nothing more or less than an Icelandic saga, the adventures of one of the earliest of our heroes, a breezy tale that would blow the vapors out of any moping fellow, in my opinion. Not to vaunt my own wares, however, here goes:"

Long, long ago, in a region near Norway, lived a king named Haloge, from whom, in after years, this country took name, Halogeland. Haloge was the fairest of living men, and in strength and stature resembled the giants from whom he was descended. His wife, too, was the child of an ancient mighty berserk; so that their daughter, Eimyrja, was not only the fairest beauty in the land, but a maiden erect and hardy as a young fir-tree, and fit to be a hero's bride.

In this king's service, as warder of his land, lived an earl named Vifil, who loved Eimyrja, and was loved in turn by her. Often had he asked the king's permission to wed the maiden, but the father refused angrily. One night, when the winds were whistling about their ears, and the .waves beat furiously upon the shores, came

Vifil in his boat to carry off the princess. Eimyrja followed her lover, and together they sailed over the dark sea to an island he had chosen for their home. Holding hard the helm with a wrist like iron, Vifil drove his boat, now upon hills of foaming emerald, now into valleys whence it threatened never to emerge. Icy gusts blew over them, hailstones smote the deck, but the dauntless Eimyrja knew no fear, when, far ahead, she could see, twinkling like a star, the light burning in the window of her husband's hut, upon a point of land rising from a circle of yeasty breakers. Vifil steered true and straight to this haven of their hopes, and, at length, when morning broke, the staunch boat was moored in safety in a tranquil harbor beneath the cliff.

When the king found out the flight of his daughter, great was his wrath. He declared Vifil to be an outlaw, banished him from the kingdom, took possession of his estates, and kept from the princess the dowry that should have been hers by right.

But Vifil and his wife, despite their poverty, loved each other dearly, and were satisfied to live in peace at Vifil's Island, like an honest farmer and his spouse. They had one son called Viking, who was very handsome, and in his early youth became a man of great stature and extraordinary strength, worthy in all things of the race from which he sprang.

When Viking was about sixteen, a certain king in Sweden, named Ring, living at no great distance from Vifil's Island, got into trouble on his own account. Ring was sovereign, not of an entire country, you understand, but of a district capable of supporting an armed force of fifty warriors, and having its own independent chief. King Ring had a lovely daughter, named Hun-

vor, a maiden of unrivalled beauty and rare education. Tall and slender as a lily, Hunvor's lips and cheeks were like ripe wood-strawberries, while her hair, like corn-silk, floated long and free. When she sat upon a cushion in her father's hall, broidering in silk and gold, all the youths in Ring's service burned with zeal to accomplish some feat of arms that might make them worthy to receive her hand in marriage. Back of the king's house was a mountain so high and dark and grim, no human foot dared penetrate its chasms, or trace its sombre paths. One day, a giant came down from this mountain and went straight to the door of Ring's house, demanding to be admitted to the king. He was a formidable creature, fierce and wild-looking, with fiery eyes, and in his hand he carried a two-headed pike.

"Go hence!" said the porters, roughly; "our king will not receive you."

With that, the stranger smote both the stalwart porters, piercing one of them with one point of the pike, and the other with the other point; holding them thus impaled, he tossed the two corpses easily over his head to the ground behind him. Meeting no further resistance from the men-at-arms, the giant strode into the king's presence, where Ring sat at meat. Not far from the king sat the fair Hunvor, and as the stranger's eyes turned upon her she trembled, knowing not why.

"Since I have taken the trouble to come down from my mountain to visit you," curtly said the giant, "I expect you, king, to grant my request without any more ado. I want your daughter Hunvor for my wife, and as you are growing a little old and infirm, I may as well take your kingdom now, and rule over it in your stead. If you refuse me, I shall kill you and take the throne and Hunvor in any case, so you may as well

submit, for I am Harek the Ironhead, whose power no man can oppose and live."

"You lose no time in stating what you wish," said King Ring, laying his hand upon his belt-knife, as did the warriors present.

"Threaten me not!" roared the giant in a tremendous voice; and, lifting his pike, he would have slain the gray-bearded Ring upon the spot, had not Hunvor, swift and fearless, come between them.

"Be not so hasty, father," she cried; "let us, at least, parley with this warrior. I like his looks not a little, and might be brought to give him my hand. But first, I wish to ask if no ransom could be paid, so that I might go free."

Harek's wrath melted like snow in the sun, as she looked on him.

"I will fight for you," he said, stoutly. "If the king, or any one he may send in his place, will meet me in single combat upon a rock at sea, fighting to the death, the one who survives may have the right to dispose of you."

So saying the Ironhead went out, and Hunvor, now the immediate danger was removed, wept bright tears upon her father's silvery locks.

"None there is strong enough to meet him, oh! my father," she cried. "Not you, and not another in the kingdom."

The king sent Hunvor to her bower, and assembled all his subjects, asking if there was one among them willing to risk the combat for her hand. One by one, the young men withdrew, for they knew that such a conflict meant certain death. Then Hunvor sent for a trusty man-servant, by name Eymund, desiring to speak with him alone in her bower.

"Eymund," said the princess, whom he found walking up and down her room, greatly excited, a red spot blazing upon either cheek, "take you a boat, and sail to Vifil's Island, which lies outside of Woolen Acre. By to-morrow, at nightfall, you will have reached the spot. On that island you will find a farm-house, and in that house live a man, his wife and their son, a youth of noble countenance. It is to this youth that I look for help in our trial, and if he cannot give it, then I know not where to turn. Greet the master and mistress, but speak not to them; only cast this letter in the son's lap. And now make haste!"

Eymund took a boat armed with eleven men, and sailed to Vifil's Island. There he found all as the princess had said, the master and mistress sitting by the fire that burnt low upon the hearth, the son returned from fishing, carrying a seal and many fine fish to lay before them. Eymund saluted the elders, but cast the letter into the son's lap. Viking, with wonder on his beautiful young face, took the letter and found within a greeting from the king's daughter, promising to be his wife if he would fight with Harek Ironhead. The blood forsook his cheeks, at which his mother besought him to tell her the contents of the letter. When they heard the news, the fond parents looked with pride upon their son, even while trembling at the risk proposed to him.

"Do you know who this monster, Harek, really is?" asked Vifil. "No? Then will I tell you, as I have good reason to know all about his family. He is one of the invincible children of a famous magician named Kol the Humpback, who owned three treasures: first, the mightiest sword in the world; second, a magical ring making its wearer fearless of every mortal power;

and, third, a drinking-horn out of the lower end of which all who drink are made as weak as children and forget the past; while to drink out of the upper end restores both health and memory. Kol's oldest son was Bjorn the Blue-Tooth, whose eye-tooth, of a bright blue color, extending an ell and a half out of his mouth, often served him to put people to death. He inherited his father's sword; but once, when I was warden of the land of your grandfather, King Haloge, I met Blue-Tooth in battle, and dealt him such a blow that his blade fell from his hand. Whereupon I picked it up, smote him through the body, and killed my enemy. This sword, Viking, I have kept for you, and in due time you shall possess it. The second child of Kol is a daughter called Dis, who still lives, and is a cruel, crafty sorceress. She owns the drinking-horn that has brought many an unwary traveller to an end worse than death. The remaining child is Harek, surnamed the Ironhead, because, at seven years old, his skull was thick enough to resist the power of Bjorn the Blue-Tooth, who, with all his might, drove his tooth against it without hurting him. To Harek fell his father's magic ring, so that no living adversary can affright him. If you have made up your mind to venture this encounter, my son, it is not I who will withhold you. But I warn you of the great strength of this man, whom no iron can scathe."

"Be that as it may," answered Viking, "I shall save the princess. Only once have our eyes met, when she saw me wrestling with her father's earls last summer on the green. But she remembers me, she trusts me, and I will be worthy of her love."

Then Vifil, seeing that the youth's mind was made up, brought out the sword Angervadil, that he had used

to slay Bjorn the Blue-Tooth, at sight of which Viking's eyes sparkled.

When Eymund, returning to his mistress, told her that on the appointed day her chosen champion would appear, a blush came upon her lily cheek. She clad herself in raiment as for a festival, and, shining like a star, sat in the highest place to look on at the meeting of the combatants. All the people were there, and the king and his nobles. None spoke, for all were heavy-hearted. Then came Harek the Ironhead, looking more doughty and forbidding than before. Last of all, entered a stripling, tall and powerful, clad in a dark blue-kirtle, with a silver belt about his waist, and on his head a cap made of a seal's skin. At his side was girt a huge sword, and his young face was beautiful as the day. Saluting the king and the princess, he declared himself to be Viking, son of Vifil, and grandson of King Haloge; and that he did no discredit to his splendid ancestry, every one avowed. When Harek found who was appointed to fight against him in the holm-gang (for so the duel on a rocky island was called), he laughed in scorn. With the king and a few others, the combatants quickly repaired to the island, where Harek, taking his place, struck at Viking a blow that under ordinary circumstances would have reduced a man to powder. Having unsheathed his glorious sword, Viking parried the blow, but did not strike. At the first sight of the magic blade, Harek trembled.

"Had I known you possessed the sword Angervadil, that for so long has been lost out of our family, I should not have encountered you!" the giant shouted; "but come on, it is your turn now."

Viking sent a quick stroke flashing through the air,

that clove in two Harek's iron skull, and, as the giant fell dead to earth, a shout went up from the spectators. Then the king and his men bore Viking away from the spot, and on the shore they were met by the princess and her maidens, and conducted in triumph to the hall. Viking was betrothed to the princess; but he agreed, since they were both so young, to travel for three years and try his fortune as a warrior of the sea, before they should be married.

The king gave him a ship, in shape like a dragon, the prow and sides inlaid with precious metals. In the summer he explored islands and skerries, fighting freely and gaining great renown as a rover; and in winter, braving tempest, snow, ice, and piercing cold, he pursued the witch-whales, taking refuge at times, but only when driven by stress of weather or by ice, in some friendly dwelling along the shore. Viking was a true Berserk, and would never have been satisfied to dally with fair maiden, and live in ease, before he had sailed the seas far and wide, overhauling merchantmen, to wrest from them tribute to be divided among his crew, or meeting in fair fight his enemies and fellow-vikings. Yes, a wild, fierce life was that; and our youth rejoiced in it. In fair weather, he would sleep upon his shield on deck, under the tent of deep blue sky; and when the storm raged he was alert, guiding his vessel over the trackless sea, searching the horizon for the glad sight of a stray ship. When one appeared to view, captain and crew were roused to exultant joy with the prospect of encounter, boarding and strife, such hot work oftentimes that the enemy would not give in till decks were strewn with heroes whose souls had sought Valhalla.

After two years of this stirring life, he came, one fair

autumnal day, upon an island shaded by a dense forest. To seek variety, Viking went ashore, and for some time wandered alone upon green moss under the drooping boughs of the wood. In a verdant glade he sat him down to listen to the sound of a murmuring stream; for, to the real Berserk, no scene of nature is complete unless it bears to his ear the music of running waters.

While thus engaged, Viking beheld a lady issue from the wood and come toward him. She was exquisitely beautiful and her speech to him was courteous. They talked together for a while, and Sun Bright (for such was the lady's name) charmed the sailor more and more. At last, complaining of thirst, he was about to drink from the streamlet.

"I have drink here worthier of a hero," said Sun Bright, with a smile; and, taking from the chain at her girdle a silver horn, she offered him wine. Viking drank eagerly of this, and, immediately feeling sleepy, his head nodded forward; and then he knew no more. When he awoke it was evening, clouds were gathering, and the wind moaned in the branches. Sun Bright had disappeared. A strange shivering fit came upon him, as he got up to stagger back to the ship. Stranger than all, he had forgotten his entire past; no memory of his betrothed wife, of his home or parents, visited his mind. When his men received him aboard ship, they laid him on a couch, for they saw he was grievously ill. For many months Viking continued under the spell of this terrible disease, growing weaker gradually. Once the crew saw three ships sailing by them, and asked if their chief could do any good to the suffering Viking. This chief, by name Halfdan, was a generous man, and his heart was touched by the spectacle he saw. He

"'I have drink here worthier of a hero,' said Sunbright with a smile."

inquired the cause of Viking's illness, and on hearing the story, said to him:

"Now am I no longer surprised, for in truth you have fallen under the spell of no less a sorceress than Dis, the famous daughter of Kol, owner of the magic drinking-horn, and sister of the Ironhead you slew. No doubt she thought to avenge her brother's death. Here will I form a brotherhood with you, and together we will try to punish this foul witch as she deserves."

Viking swore fellowship with Halfdan, who soon after went ashore to visit an open space in the forest, where, coming up to a large rock, he knocked on it with his stick. The rock opened and out came a dwarf, who, on seeing his visitor, greeted him pleasantly.

"And what do you expect me to do for you this time, my son?" asked the dwarf.

"I want you to procure for me the drinking-horn of Dis, the sorceress," said Halfdan, boldly.

At hearing this name, the dwarf shuddered. "What you ask of me would be my death if I attempted it," he said; "know you not that in all the world there is not a witch like Dis? However, as in times past you have done me a great service, I shall do my best to help you."

Halfdan was obliged to be satisfied with this promise, and, returning to the ships, told Viking of what had occurred. After seven days' delay, at the end of which Viking seemed to be near the point of death, Halfdan received a visit from his friend the dwarf, who was so exhausted that he could hardly speak, but, with panting breath, placed in Halfdan's hands the magic drinking-horn.

"Now must I make all speed to hide myself," said

the dwarf, when he could speak. "Do not ask me how this treasure came into my possession. Be satisfied that it was not secured without the exercise of all my strength and skill. We had a fierce encounter, and as I believe Dis to have been mortally wounded in the course of it, I am in haste to get to a place of safety where I am sure they will not pursue me ; so farewell, and luck attend thee and the gallant Viking."

Halfdan thanked the generous dwarf, returning speedily to his friend's side. There was no time to lose, for our poor hero lay with glazing eyes, and all consciousness was gone. Reversing the horn, Halfdan poured from the upper end of it a few drops of the liquid it contained into Viking's mouth, and immediately the blood coursed into his cheeks, his pulse beat again, and life and strength came back to him. Once more was he the vigorous youngster who had met in single combat the terrible Ironhead. With health, came back memory. Viking thought of his parents, of his long-forgotten bride ; and a great desire to see them took possession of him. Urging Halfdan to accompany him to his home, the two joined ships and sailed to Woolen Acre. There a shock awaited them. The friends and followers of Ironhead and Dis, rallying to avenge their leaders, had descended upon the mansion of King Ring, murdered the king and his courtiers, ravaged the country-side with fire, and, taking Hunvor and her maidens captive, had carried them away to a fortified town in the interior. Viking's blood surged in a mighty current through his veins, as he swore to rescue Hunvor. Together as before, he and his ally Halfdan sailed northward, till they met a fleet of eighteen ships, which proved to be a formidable array of the enemy. No need to ask what followed. Without

delay they hurled a shower of stones so straight and strong as to kill more than a hundred men in their sleep, taking them by surprise. The battle raged till nightfall, and on the second day it began again, but in the end our heroes won both victory and many rich prizes. From their prisoners they learned the way to the town where Hunvor had been carried, the present fleet having been placed there expressly to prevent Viking from following her. After gathering new ships and new men, the brothers-in-arms proceeded directly to land, and confronted the army of the wily Dis before the burg in which Hunvor was confined. Dis, although grievously wounded in her struggle with the dwarf, had rallied all her forces, and was now determined to crush Viking and recover from him both sword and ring and drinking-horn. The battle set in, and a bloodier one was never fought, so thought our two brave warriors. During four days it raged unceasingly, and although Dis was frequently struck, she appeared not to be wounded, but moved as if floating through the air, exhausting all her powers of magic against the combatants. Finally, by surrounding her with shields, they succeeded in making a captive of her and tied her hands with bow-strings ; and then the men, covering her with the skin of an animal, stoned her to death for a foul witch, as she was.

After her death the army could not hold out as before, and yielded to their brave opponents. Viking rushed into the town, liberated Hunvor and her maidens, and, clasping his beloved to his breast, swore that the marriage should take place at once. This was done, and after exchanging vows of friendship and gratitude with noble Halfdan, the newly wedded couple went aboard the dragon ship to sail over sparkling

brine to the little island home, where Vifil and his wife waited to welcome and to bless them.

When the walrus tooth ceased speaking, Regi's face was flushed as with the glow of outdoor exercise, and his blood tingled.

"I'd a great deal rather be a Viking than a lawyer!" he remarked, as if following out some harassing train of thought.

THE FRENCH FAN'S STORY.

More than once, upon his visits to the cabinet, Regi had been struck by the appearance of an open fan that seemed coquettishly to invite his better acquaintance. It was a folding fan, painted on ancient vellum, the sticks of ivory overspread with a peculiarly brilliant and lustrous polish, making it glow with the glitter of a gem. The pictures on this fan represented ladies in looped-up gowns and high-heeled slippers, sitting upon banks covered with roses, or wandering beneath forest boughs accompanied by cavaliers in satin small-clothes, velvet coats and curling powdered wigs, all painted with exquisite delicacy in hues borrowed from the clouds at sunset, and softened, though not effaced, by time. There was one charming little demoiselle in particular, who, ever since Regi could remember her, had been attempting to step over a brook. She had pink stockings and a pearl necklace, and Regi thought her the prettiest girl he had ever seen—prettier even than the young lady in the chromo decorating the old nursery-clock.

"I think I shall ask you for a story," he said, stopping before this fan one day, when the floating snow made a white world without.

"Me! oh! willingly, monsieur," the fan answered, fluttering before him in a sort of courtesy. "I have had much pleasure in listening to what the others have

found to say. In the—if you will pardon me—somewhat melancholy atmosphere in which we find ourselves, one relishes a little amusement now and then. If you could imagine how strange it seems to me, to see a grand salon like this deserted from week's end to week's end! No music, no little dances, no games of cards! True, we well understand that monsieur, your papa, has the misfortune to be a widower; but then, with a slight effort, he might easily find distraction in friendly receptions now and then—no pomp, no show—a card-table, a little turn in the waltz, a cup of chocolate, or a glass of lemonade. Those things are managed better in France."

"I don't believe papa would care for them much," answered Regi, trying to imagine his father taking a little turn in the waltz, and failing utterly.

"Every one to his taste," the fan said, in a resigned tone. Regi noticed that she spoke in a high flute-like voice, a little positive, but caressing when she chose to make it so, altogether more refined and stately than the others.

"Heigho! It is evident that I belong to a past age," she said, with a faint sigh bringing to the boy's nostrils an odor of attar of rose.

"You look pretty old, though you aren't much cracked," said blundering Regi; "how old are you, anyway?"

The fan shuddered at this indiscreet question until she set the Sèvres figures in her immediate neighborhood in dangerous motion.

"My dear, you are an actual barbarian!" she responded, when sufficiently recovered. "Do you not know that a woman has no age? It is sufficient for me to tell you that I am decorated in 'Vernis Martin,' a

species of varnish invented by a court carriage-maker of a celebrated epoch in Paris; and that my youth was spent in the boudoir of a very great lady, who was proud to own a work of art coming from the hand of a famous painter of the day. Little did I think, then, of surviving to reach an exile such as this. Why, it's worse than a convent! Here I stand behind this screen of glass, in pretty good company, I don't deny; but what do we see of life, of society, beyond Mary with the duster, and the footman who fetches logs for the fire? I wouldn't give a pinch of snuff for it!"

"I didn't know I was rude," Regi put in, hoping to calm her growing agitation. "I think you're lovely, and so does everybody. Did you never hear that lady tell stories to her children?"

"The countess was too much occupied with the society of the court to have time for amusing her children—though they came in, morning and evening, to salute her, in charge of their governess and nurses. The stories I heard were lively and plentiful, but hardly such as would entertain a little boy like you. Stay, there was one I may recall. It was told to the eldest daughter of Madame la Comtesse by an old abbé, a priest, who used to visit at the house; and it was called "The Sapphire Bird."

"That is the kind of name I like," answered Regi, brightening. He fixed his eyes upon the little maiden with the pearl necklace, making believe that it was she who talked to him, now that peace was restored, and the fan resumed her soft and pleasant tones.

Perhaps this story was suggested to me by the allusion to your father's solitary lot, for it begins by

describing the sorrow of a certain king who had lost his consort. So violent was his grief that, for eight days after the queen's death, he shut himself up in his room, refusing to speak to any one and continually beating his head against the wall. Unknown to the unfortunate monarch, his courtiers introduced cushions of down between the tapestry and the wainscot of his apartment, thus preserving from certain destruction the brains that were supposed to govern a mighty kingdom. Day after day, deputations of his subjects waited on him, urging the king to cheer up; but in vain. He resolutely declined to smile, until one day, among his petitioners, appeared a woman veiled from head to foot in black crape.

"What can I do for you, my good lady?" asked the mournful monarch.

"Alas, sire, it is little that human aid can do to comfort me, for I am slowly dying of grief for the loss of the best of husbands," answered the lady, sobbing bitterly. "But ere I go, I want provision made for my young daughter, Truitonne, who is at present residing with her godmother, the fairy Soussio. My husband left a large fortune to his child, which wicked people are trying to get away from us; and for my orphaned girl I ask your kind help. When her rights are established, I shall be willing to depart from this darkened world."

The lady became so agitated that she was forced to throw back her veil for fear of fainting, and the king beheld in his unknown visitor one of the most beautiful creatures he had ever seen. Unable to resist her petition and her tears, he did all she asked of him, and more; for, in six months' time the afflicted widower married the afflicted widow, and together they sat upon the throne.

Now, the king also had a daughter, a girl of extraordinary grace and accomplishments. Her name was Florine, and, after welcoming her beautiful new mamma, she prepared with even greater joy for the reception of her new sister, Truitonne, who was to come back from the fairy Soussio's house to live at the palace. When Truitonne arrived, the entire household was taken disagreeably by surprise to find in her an ugly, pert, ill-tempered minx, with whom, owing to her unbearable disposition, it was impossible to live in peace. Before twenty-four hours passed, she had boxed Florine's ears, killed her canary birds, let the water run off her gold-fish, leaving them high and dry, spilt ink on her Sunday frock, and made faces at the king behind his back! In a week's time every courtier, maid-of-honor, governess and servant about the palace, had some story to tell of Truitonne's sly performances. It was of no use to speak to the queen, for she thought Truitonne perfect, and the king saw everything as the queen did. Florine, poor dear pretty Florine, was pushed to the wall, as it were, and neglected, while the queen forced everyone to do honor to her own fright of a daughter.

Things went on in this sad way, till one day it was rumored that King Charming, the monarch of a neighboring country, young, rich, and celebrated for his gallantry and generosity, was on the way to seek his bride at the court of Florine's father. Naturally, everybody talked of the suitability of a match between him and the lovely princess. "It would be such a good opportunity for the poor thing to escape from her step-mother and step-sister," people said. "Besides, the beautiful Florine was born to grace a throne." But when the queen heard the news, she persuaded the king that it was his duty to give Truitonne the first

chance to win so splendid an establishment. She set all the dress-makers, and milliners, and wig-makers and jewellers in the kingdom to work to make an outfit for Truitonne ; and when the day for King Charming's visit arrived, she bribed the waiting-maids to lock up all of Florine's clothes, and to lose the keys. So poor Florine, when she went to her room to dress, could find only a simple every-day frock of white muslin, without so much as a ribbon for her hair, or a sash for her waist. One of the little pages, who loved Florine, ran up to her with a bunch of red roses he had gathered in the garden, of which Florine made a wreath for her nut-brown locks ; and then she went down to the reception of the king, feeling very shabby and decidedly out of place. In her embarrassment, she took a seat in the corner, expecting to pass unnoticed. There, in a conspicuous place, sat Truitonne, so laced, and painted, and frizzed and furbelowed, you would hardly have known her. She was really quite passable, and, when King Charming was presented to her by her mamma, he bowed politely, though inwardly wondering why report always exaggerates the beauty of a girl. Presently, when he heard her mother address her as Truitonne, he asked quickly, "But is there not another princess named Florine?"

"The king *has* a daughter by that name," answered Truitonne, reluctantly, "but she is an awkward, half-witted thing, and we don't care to talk about her, or to show her before strangers."

The little page, who was serving a cup of wine to King Charming at this moment, heard Truitonne's abominable slander, and resolved to punish her. Accordingly, he spilt a large flagon of Burgundy over Truitonne's white satin dress, completely ruining it.

Truitonne, who had never learned to restrain her temper, flew into a rage, boxed his ears, dashed the cup and flagon to the ground, and finally ordered Florine, insultingly, to come and kneel before her and rub the spots upon the injured gown. As Florine, blushing deeply, obeyed, King Charming saw for the first time this lovely young creature, clad in white and crowned with natural roses.

"Allow me, mademoiselle," he said, taking the napkin from her hand and casting it to the floor. "Beauty like yours should never stoop to degrade itself before insult and ill-temper."

So saying, he turned his back upon Truitonne, and, on learning that the Princess Florine was before him, devoted himself to her for the remainder of the day. When the banquet was announced, he gave his arm to Florine to lead her in, seating her at his right hand, and pledging her in his first draught of wine. The queen and Truitonne, who were unable to help themselves, were of course furious. When the evening was at an end, they retired to plot mischief; and hardly had Florine reached her own apartment, before she found herself seized by four masked men, who, regardless of her cries and struggles, bound and carried her to the top of a high tower, where she was locked up in a dismal room.

Next morning King Charming, who was all impatience to again behold his charmer, heard from the king, who was himself deceived into believing it, that Florine had chosen to keep her room in a fit of temper.

"My poor step-daughter is all caprice, king," said the wily queen. "In fact, deeply as I regret to have to tell you, her temper is so dreadful that it is charity to believe her insane. After she saw you last evening,

she relapsed into such a violent state that I dared not inform her father. Truitonne, my dear, generous Truitonne and I watched by her all the night."

"But it is better for her to be out of her mind, your majesty," added a lady-in-waiting, whom the queen had bribed to slander Florine; "for we all know to our sorrow, that when she is herself, no one can equal Princess Florine in mean deceitfulness; how she imposes upon that angel Princess Truitonne, who is so sweet and loving with her!"

"Yes," said another lady-in-waiting, also in the queen's pay, "Princess Truitonne is a model of all virtue, all true nobility of soul. I often ask myself how nature could have put so deformed a soul into a body so beautiful as Princess Florine's."

There was more conversation of the same kind, and the king, going out of the room in a transport of disappointment and indignation, ran upon the little page who had spilled the wine the day before.

"What, are you still crying because of a cuff on the ear bestowed yesterday, my little man?" said the king.

"No, your majesty, I never cried for that," the boy said, stoutly; "I weep because our dear Princess Florine has been locked up in yonder tower, and the queen tells lies about her to every one who will listen to them."

The young king's face brightened wonderfully at this. He questioned the lad and resolved to secure a secret interview with Florine, when he might arrange to marry her and take her away forever from the present miserable existence. So, inducing the page to carry a message and a purse of gold to one of the ladies placed in attendance upon Florine, he asked that the princess would grant him an interview the same night at a lower window of the tower.

The little page was true, but the lady-in-waiting, although she received the purse of gold, hastened to betray all to the queen, who determined upon the desperate measure of sending her despised and slighted Truitonne to the window in Florine's place.

It was a dark night and the lover was easily deceived. Climbing up to the window upon the ivy that grew in massive lattice-work around the tower, he saw within a figure clothed in white, who listened in silence to his vows of love.

"As I despair of winning you by ordinary means," he said, "I have resolved to enlist the aid of a friend who is a magician. To-morrow night, at this same time, I shall arrive here at your window in a flying chariot drawn by winged frogs, by means of which we may escape without fear of being followed."

"I will consent to fly with you," whispered the supposed Florine, "if you will permit the marriage ceremony to take place at the house of my god-mother, the fairy Soussio, who would never forgive me if I were wedded elsewhere."

"Where you will," exclaimed the enraptured king, who then placed upon her finger a ring of gold, in token of betrothal.

On the following night, true to his promise, King Charming, driving a flying chariot drawn by winged frogs, appeared at the tower window. Veiled from head to foot in gauze, the bride got into the chariot, and together the happy couple flew off to the castle of the fairy Soussio.

Soussio received them with surprise, but the bride, without unveiling, took her aside and revealed the forbidding face of Truitonne, relating how she had managed to ensnare Charming, and wondering how

they could contrive to have the marriage take place before the king should find out his mistake.

"As to that," said Soussio, laughing maliciously, "when I have once secured the presence of a guest within these walls, it is easy for me to deal with him. Let me see, though. It were better he should not see you before the ceremony."

While Soussio and her goddaughter were plotting thus, the impatient king walked up and down a gallery at the end of which a large mirror was placed, chancing to look into which, he saw to his dismay the reflected images of the fairy and Truitonne, standing together in a room opposite.

"I am betrayed!" shouted the king, hand on sword. "Let me but find out by what trickery this creature has been substituted for my adorable Florine."

"Too late, King Charming!" exclaimed the quick Soussio. "Now that you have eloped with my godchild, you are in honor bound to marry her immediately."

"I marry that deceitful little fright! Never!" cried the angry Charming. "Restore to me my own princess, to whom I gave a ring in token of betrothal."

"I am she, king," said Truitonne, simpering, as she extended the ring upon her finger. "It was to me your troth was plighted."

"It is all a piece of foul trickery," he repeated angrily, refusing to look at her. "Where are my frogs? I'll not stay a moment longer."

"Not so fast, if you please," said Soussio, extending her wand. And there were King Charming's feet stuck as tight to the floor as if they had been nailed to it!

During twenty days and nights the hapless king re-

mained in this position, while, first the fairy, and then the princess, plead with, or reasoned with, or lectured or threatened him. But all in vain. "If I stay here till doomsday, I will have nobody but Florine," he staunchly answered. At last Soussio, out of all patience, told him to choose between marriage with her goddaughter Truitonne, and doing penance during seven years under another shape.

"Do your worst, old witch," said the king. "It could not be more of a penance than to marry Truitonne."

At that, the fairy struck him smartly with her wand.

"Begone from my palace!" she exclaimed. "For seven years to come, you shall be a sapphire bird."

In an instant, the king was changed into a bird with plumage of a lustrous sapphire blue; and, uttering a single farewell note, he flew out of the window, as far as he could go from the dreadful home of Soussio.

The fairy next carried Truitonne back to her mother, informing the queen of the failure of their plans.

"There is one person who shall not enjoy our mortification," said the queen, "and that is Florine." So she dressed Truitonne in a rich bridal gown of white and silver, with garlands of orange blossoms, and, putting the king's ring upon her finger, led her to Florine's room.

"I have brought King Charming's bride to receive your congratulations," said the queen. "The king bids me say to you that, having married Truitonne, he desires to have nothing more to say to her despised rival, Florine."

Florine, doubting nothing, fainted away upon the floor. When she came to herself, she was again in solitude in her lonely tower room. Going to the win-

dow for air, she saw in the branches of a cypress that grew to an immense height beside the turret, an exquisite blue bird, who watched her every movement.

"Now am I ready to die," lamented the unfortunate princess. "I could not live to witness the happiness of Truitonne as Charming's wife. Ah! king! little did you know that on the first day we met you won my heart forever!"

Immediately, the blue bird flew in at the window, and to her astonishment spoke to her in a voice that exactly resembled Charming's.

"Is it possible that I am again to see you, princess?" he said; "I am only fearful I shall die of joy."

"And who are you, my charming bird?" said Florine, caressing with delight his beautiful plumage.

"You have spoken my name, and yet you pretend not to recognize me," said the sapphire bird, reproachfully.

"King Charming! Can this be you?" exclaimed Florine, greatly agitated.

"Too truly it is I, my princess. I have fallen into the power of the fairy Soussio, and for seven years I am doomed to remain in this shape as a punishment for my love for you."

"And yet you could marry Truitonne!" said the princess. "For I saw your ring upon her finger."

"You, like myself, have been cruelly deceived," rejoined the bird, who then told her all that had passed since her imprisonment. The hours flew like minutes; and when it was time for them to part, the sapphire bird promised to come again next day, and every day, until something should occur to interrupt their happy meetings.

He flew back to his own kingdom, and, entering in at

"Immediately, the blue bird flew in at the window, and spoke to her in a voice that exactly resembled Charming's."

his palace window, took from his late mother's jewels a superb pair of diamond eardrops which, on the morrow, he carried as a present to Florine.

In this way, not a day passed that he did not carry to his captive love some rare gem or ornament. Now it was a necklace, now bracelets, now a watch set in a single pearl, until the turret room overflowed with precious objects. At this juncture the father of Florine died, without knowing that his unhappy child was in possession of her senses, the queen having persuaded him that the princess had become a dangerous lunatic whom it was their duty to keep in confinement. Now the queen and Truitonne had no further fear of interruption to their cruel treatment of the poor girl, who, during two long years, was kept shut up, having bread and water put in at her cell door once a week only.

Little cared Florine, since every day came her beloved sapphire bird, bearing in his beak rare fruits or dainty food. Little by little, he brought her enough down to make a mattrass for her hard bed, and soft linen for its covering. When he was not talking with her, they sang together, and Florine asked no greater happiness than his dear company.

One night the queen was informed by one of her servants that the music of two voices, blended in song, had been heard to float from the Princess Florine's tower. This excited the queen's suspicion, and, with Truitonne, she climbed up the tower steps they were generally too lazy to ascend, to listen at the door. As had been said, there were certainly two voices, and, unlocking the door, the queen rushed in.

"Who has dared to intrude upon your privacy?" she screamed.

At the first sound of danger, the sapphire bird had

flown to his perch in the cypress, and the queen found the chamber empty, save of the captive princess, who was unfortunately decked out in jewels fit for a sovereign, while her couch and dressing table were spread with lace and linen fine as a cobweb.

"How came you in possession of such riches?" asked the queen, angrily.

"Since you have not visited me for two years, it can matter little to you what I have found in this tower," said the princess, quietly.

The baffled queen searched the room, to find, hidden in Florine's pallet, a quantity of diamonds, pearls, rubies and gems of topaz, which she could not account for. Her first intention was to carry these treasures into her own quarters, but, on second thought, she resolved merely to set spies to see how Florine came into possession of them; hoping thereby to secure as many more.

Holes were therefore bored in the tower room door, and a man set behind them to keep watch. For a week, at least, Florine, suspecting mischief, made the bird keep away, but at the end of that time, hearing no noise without, she summoned him again. The spy saw the princess go to the window and beckon, when, without delay, a beautiful sapphire bird came flying to perch on her finger and caress her with his beak, but not until he had dropped into her hand a pendant of rare black pearls.

The queen, at hearing this, came the next night to see, for herself, the princess receive from her bird-lover a ring of enormously large brilliants. "This can be no other than the enchanted king," said the jealous woman; and, informing Truitonne of her discovery, the two plotted a terrible revenge. Causing swords,

cutlasses, razors, knives, daggers and other sharp instruments to be affixed to every part of the cypress tree, they hid below it, till the hour of the bird's next visit. The unlucky bird, suspecting nothing, flew upon his usual perch to find himself pierced and cut unmercifully, in every part of his body at once. Flying with the utmost difficulty away from the deadly tree, he reached the forest where he was accustomed to flit about when not with the princess. Then exhaustion overcame him, and, bathed in blood, he sank upon the limb of a tree, believing himself to be at the point of death.

There he was discovered by his friend the magician, who, having seen the frog-chariot return home without its owner, suspected mischief, and set off in search of him. Seven times had the magician been round the world without finding a trace of King Charming ; and, just as he was setting off on his eighth journey, he happened to pass through the wood where the sufferer had retired. There, blowing his trumpet according to custom, and calling aloud, "King Charming, King Charming, where art thou ?" the friendly magician heard a moan, and a faint voice answering him from the tree above.

"I am he whom you seek," said the wounded sapphire bird ; "I am the wretched Charming, slain before the eyes of her he loves."

The enchanter quickly climbed up to him, and, on applying a salve he carried in his pocket, had the pleasure of restoring the bird as completely as if he never had been wounded.

"I would that it were in my power to give you back your shape," said the magician ; "but the fairy Soussio is in many respects my superior. All I can do is to

journey with you to her palace, and try what persuasion or bribery will do to make her withdraw the curse. And, as it is evident that spies are set between you and the princess, you must not risk returning thither."

The bird agreed, and they repaired to the fairy's castle. Soussio received her visitors pleasantly enough; but, on finding out what the magician had to propose, her eyes flashed fire.

"Never shall he be restored, until he marries my goddaughter!" she cried.

As Soussio had never been known to change her mind, the magician decided, mournfully enough, it was his duty to persuade Charming to accept the hateful Truitonne. To this end, he agreed with the fairy that, if she would restore the king to his natural shape, he, the magician, would spend several months in influencing him to take the bride proposed. Should Charming hold out in his refusal, the fairy was to change him back again into the sapphire bird.

King Charming was not at first told of the conditions that awaited him. The fairy simply transformed him, and left the room. Then the magician, with much apprehension, explained to him the condition of affairs.

"I had rather remain a blue bird all my days than marry Truitonne," said the king, sadly.

He was the fairy's prisoner, so she shut him up in a gorgeous chamber communicating with a smaller room, where any one who spoke in the king's apartment could be distinctly heard. Here, every day, he was permitted to view Truitonne, the fairy and the magician listening in the hope of overhearing some change of determination on his part. The fairy instructed Truitonne to alter her manner completely, and to assume the utmost gentleness. Next, she bade Truitonne inform

the king that Florine, on hearing of his supposed death, had herself pined away and died. This intelligence caused the king such deep sorrow, that he could hardly be persuaded to take food or rest. He was plunged into a melancholy from which nothing could divert him ; and, while in this state, he made no longer objection to the presence of Truitonne, who every day came to him with pretended compassion.

Meanwhile, Florine, concealing her jewels in her dress, managed to escape from her tower, and to set out on a journey in search of her beloved.

"I shall travel onward until I meet him, or have tidings of him," she said. Walking day and night until footsore and exhausted, she one morning sat down by a brook in the forest for the purpose of laving her bleeding feet. While thus employed, she was saluted by an old woman who came out of the woods.

"What are you doing here alone, my pretty maiden?" she asked.

"Good mother, I am not alone," answered the princess, "since my sorrows always go with me."

"Suppose you tell me what those sorrows are," said the old woman, struck by the sadness of tone in one so young.

Florine told her story ; and, looking up in conclusion, she beheld the old woman change into a magnificently dressed lady, whose eyes were full of benevolence, although her brow was stern.

"I recognize the tricks of that ill-bred Soussio," she said, with severity. "Know, maiden, that I too am a fairy, and that I will help you to regain your lost love. King Charming is no longer a sapphire bird ; he has regained his own shape and is a prisoner in Soussio's castle. Journey thither, taking with you these four

eggs ; at the moment of your most urgent need, break one of them, and you will find the assistance you require."

Florine took the eggs the fairy handed her, and, with many thanks, resumed her journey, more anxious than before to reach its end. Before long she came to a mountain of pure ivory, so steep that she could not put her feet upon it without slipping. After many unsuccessful attempts to scale the mountain, she lay down at its foot, determined to die there ; but, bethinking her of the eggs, she took out one and broke it, finding within four clasps of gold, which she put upon her feet, and was thus enabled to climb the ivory mountain with perfect ease. When she reached the top a new difficulty presented itself. The valley upon the other side was composed of a single sheet of looking-glass, around which all the inhabitants of the country, far and wide, were gathered admiring themselves heartily, since this mirror had the property of reflecting people, not as they were, but as they wished to be. In the self-admiring multitude were as many men as women ; and as they looked up and saw Florine on top of the mountain that no one had ever before succeeded in scaling, they murmured indignantly :

"What, is this wretch coming down upon us! Her next step will break our mirror into pieces."

So great was their resentment, that Florine dared go no farther. In despair, she broke another one of the fairy's eggs, finding within a silver chariot drawn by two milk-white doves. The chariot at once expanding to a size in which she could conveniently sit, Florine kissed each of her sweet little doves, asking them to carry her in safety to the castle of fairy Soussio.

She sailed over the heads of the astonished groups

below, and ere long reached the outer wall of the fairy's castle. How her heart beat on descending from the chariot. Next, she stained her beautiful skin of a dark brown color, matted her hair, and put on rough garments. This done, she presented herself at the gate, asking to see the king who was visiting the fairy.

"Get you gone, girl," said the warder. "It's a pretty time to ask to see King Charming, just as everybody believes he has made up his mind to wed the Princess Truitonne. By to-morrow, at the latest, we hope for the announcement of their betrothal."

Florine felt as if she would faint, but persistently kept her place. By and by out came Truitonne, dressed for a walk and looking most hideous.

"Would your highness condescend to look at some beautiful ornaments?" asked the peasant girl, holding out two of the emerald bracelets once presented her by King Charming.

Truitonne, who was very fond of finery, eagerly clutched the jewels.

"What price do you set upon them?" she asked.

"No money will buy them, your highness. But if I might have leave to pass the night in the famous chamber of echoes of which I have heard so much, I should be content to give the jewels up to you."

Truitonne, who took her for a crazy creature, readily obtained leave of the fairy to gratify this freak. That evening, the vain princess displayed her new bracelets to the king, who, with more animation than he had shown for a long time past, examined them, saying they resembled ornaments once in his possession.

That night, the king, whose memories of Florine had been painfully aroused by looking at the bracelets,

could not sleep. He tossed upon his pillow, and at midnight he heard a voice lamenting softly:

"He can forget, but I remember."

So powerfully did this voice remind him of his dead Florine, that the king sat up in bed. Hearing no more, he supposed it to be a part of his uneasy dreams.

Next day Florine broke another one of her eggs, finding within the prettiest toy imaginable. It was a small carriage made of polished wood and steel, inlaid with gold, drawn by six green mice, and driven by a rose-colored rat in livery. In the carriage were four dolls on springs, which performed many amusing tricks. When Truitonne came out to take her walk, she seemed to be in a bad humor; and in truth she had reason to be, since the king, filled with renewed memories of Florine, had treated her with the utmost coldness. The peasant maid, winding up her pretty chariot, placed it directly in the pathway of the princess, when the coachman cracked his whip, the mice went off at a gallop, the puppets within smiled and bowed repeatedly.

"Oh, I must own this wonderful toy!" cried Truitonne, who had the bad habit of wanting everything she saw.

"It shall be yours, madam, if I may sleep but one night more in that wonderful chamber of echoes," answered the girl.

Truitonne gave her leave to do so; and that night Florine began again lamenting in a sweet low voice. But, to make him sleep better, the fairy had secretly drugged the king's drink, and this time he slept through all. Florine wept bitterly, when she found this to be the case. Next morning, she despairingly broke the last egg, feeling that her chances were very slight. Out

came a large pie, in which nestled a dozen birds, singing delightfully when the cover of the pie was raised. That evening, when Truitonne and the fairy were at dinner with the king, the peasant girl pushed her way through the guards, bearing the pastry, which she set upon the table. Truitonne lifted the top, and out popped a dozen little heads with open beaks. Immediately the chorus began, and what song should they sing but one in which Florine had often mingled her voice with that of her lover in the tower.

The king listened, and tears came into his eyes. His head fell forward on his breast, and his thoughts dwelt more and more on the image of his lost love. He was roused by the sharp voice of Truitonne bargaining with the peasant girl, for the purchase of this splendid pie.

"It is yours, madam, if I may sleep but once more in the chamber of echoes," answered the girl; and something in her voice reminded him of Florine. Abruptly quitting the room, he was seen no more that evening.

When Florine had gained the usual permission to sleep in the chamber of echoes, she managed, in going hither, to meet the king's personal attendant. Inquiring what his master drank before retiring, she heard that it was a cup mixed by fairy Soussio's own hand.

"All these shall be yours," said the girl, pressing into his hand a number of unset diamonds and rubies, "if you will see that he takes a goblet of pure cold water, instead."

The servant readily consented, and, at the appointed time, managed to spill the fairy's drink, and to offer cold water in its stead. Charming, too absorbed with his own troubles to notice what he was drinking, took

the water, and, dismissing the man, threw himself down, all dressed, upon his couch. Toward midnight, he heard Florine's voice distinctly say :

"I remember—you forget—
Can I hope you love me yet?"

"Florine!" he cried, springing to his feet. The voice ceased, but he was sure that it came from the room of echoes, where he now remembered the strange peasant girl had asked leave to sleep. In a moment he had passed into the gallery and had thrown open the door of the room of echoes. There, instead of the brown-skinned shabby stranger, stood his lovely Florine, alive and well, extending her arms to him with a look of fond reproach. The king clasped her to his heart, and for a long time they talked uninterrupted, each explaining to the other the series of misfortunes that had kept them thus apart, until a sudden noise announced the arrival of visitors to the castle.

Who should these visitors, coming thus unexpectedly in the night, prove to be, but the friendly magician and the fairy of the eggs. The latter, by good luck, was a fairy of far higher rank, and of greater power than the cruel Soussio, who cringed before her. When this important personage demanded, as an especial favor, the immediate release of King Charming, and permission for his marriage with Florine to be celebrated on the spot, Soussio was all smiles and civility. Desiring nothing so much as to be regarded as a friend and associate by the great fairy, Soussio made haste to celebrate the nuptials of Charming and Florine without delay. When the wedding festivities were at their height, Truitonne came running through the crowd,

loading the new bride and groom with all the abuse she could think of.

"Stop!" cried the friendly fairy, in a terrible voice that made all present tremble. "I am determined there shall be nothing to trouble the perfect happiness of this faithful pair. Truitonne, I condemn you to become a black cat for the remainder of your days. Your wicked mother has already been changed to a similar shape, and is waiting for you at the bottom of the staircase."

Truitonne, accordingly, became a black cat, and ran off, spitting and snarling, down the marble stairs, lamented by nobody, even her godmother having tired of her whims and tantrums. The last that was seen of the two cats, they were disappearing, in miserable plight, into the woods, whence they never came out again.

"That's a good long one," observed Regi, when the fan paused for breath.

"And you are a good listener, mon petit," graciously said the narrator. But the little boy made no answer. He was wondering if Florine did not look like the lady on the fan.

THE STORY OF THE SILVER PORRINGER.

THE next tale told to Regi came from a queer little flat silver porringer, picked up by his father in a shop in Stockholm, by way of a souvenir that would slip easily into an outside pocket.

Once there lived a girl named Christina, who had a wicked step-mother. Christina was very beautiful, with eyes as blue as the summer sky, a complexion of lilies and roses, and long flaxen hair that she wore braided in two plaits reaching almost to the ground. When she had reached the age of sixteen, the step-mother grew so jealous of her beauty, that she determined to set Christina to work in the fields, hoping that the sun and wind might tarnish the fairness of her skin. But the sun only smiled on the young girl, and the wind kissed her gently. She became prettier every day. Then the step-mother resolved to send her to mind the pigs in the heart of a damp and noisome wood, on the edge of a stagnant pool. Christina had to get up by daybreak and drive her snuffling, grunting charges into the wood, and remained there all day with but a morsel of oatmeal bread to stay her hunger.

One day, when she was searching the bushes in the hope of finding there a few ripe berries, for the poor

child was half starved and ready to cry from loneliness, a great white bear came out of the forest, and bade her have no fear of him, as he would be her friend.

"I began to think I had no friend on earth," Christina said, the big tears welling out of her pretty blue eyes.

The bear made her tell him her troubles ; and the first thing he then did was to run off somewhere and come back speedily, holding a basket in his mouth. Christina opened the basket and, to her delight, found beautiful rolls of white bread, some slices of roast fowl, and grapes and pears such as she had never seen the like of, together with a little flask of ruby wine, and a drinking cup of chased silver. What a delicious meal she made ! The bear would not take a thing, although she urged him politely to do so, but stood watching her with a kind look in his eyes. "Now, I must leave you, most lovely maiden," he said ; "but first take this little golden whistle, and hang it round your neck. If ever you need my help for anything, blow upon it, and I shall aid you."

That evening, when the girl returned home, the step-mother greeted her angrily.

"So you've come back, have you?" she cried. "Why in the world you haven't died of hunger, I can't imagine, unless you live to spite me."

For some days, the bear continued to bring Christina food, until the step-mother, suspecting the girl of having found a friend, followed her, and hid behind an oak-tree to see all that passed. When she saw Christina faring like a princess, the woman was furious, but dared not rush out then and there, for fear of the bear, whose claws were formidable. When Christina came home that night, she suspected that something

was wrong, and, listening after she went to bed, heard the step-mother consulting with the hunters of the village as to how, on the morrow, they might entrap and kill the bear. At early dawn, the young girl stole out to the forest, and blew her golden whistle. Instantly, the bear came trotting down the green forest path to meet her, and Christina warned him of the old woman's wicked purpose.

"Have no fear, lady love," said the bear. "I can take care of myself and of you too, if you will let me. The time has come for you to escape from that crone, who will end by treating you with violence. But, first, before I carry you away, promise to obey me in all things."

"Oh, I promise gladly, if you will only shelter me from my cruel step-mother," said Christina, sobbing. "My life has become so wretched that I shall be thankful to escape."

So the bear took her upon his back, and they journeyed fast and far, over hill and dale. They came at last to the entrance of a forest, and the bear set her gently down.

"Here you may follow me," he said; "but on no account touch anything you see."

The path lay between woods where even the smallest leaf was made of silver that shone, oh, so beautifully! Christina was enchanted, and several times stretched out her hand to pluck a shining twig, but each time drew it back again without doing so. At last she could not resist, and, as they were leaving the wood, broke off a single silver leaf and stuffed it in the bosom of her gown.

"What have you done, my love?" cried the bear, reproachfully.

"'Oh! I've only broken off one tiny leaf,' said Christina, feeling very guilty."

"Oh! I've only broken off one tiny leaf," said Christina, feeling very guilty.

"Quick, jump on my back again. It's a question whether we escape alive." Then a pair of furious wolves were heard growling in the deepest part of the wood. The bear ran swiftly, but the wolves ran after him, and for many miles the terrible chase was kept up. At length the bear, with a mighty effort, crossed a stream they dared not pass.

Once on the other side, he fell down, panting and nearly breathless.

"Forgive me, dear bear," exclaimed the penitent maiden. "I have made you suffer so much."

She made him a couch of green moss and leaves, taking his great head upon her lap. After a time, the bear's strength came back, and they resumed their journey.

At the entrance of a second forest, he made her again walk behind him. To Christina's delight, this forest was even more lovely than the first. The leaves and branches, and the soft moss underneath, were all of purest gold. Until they reached the end of the path, she did not lift her hand to touch anything. But, attracted by a lily of virgin gold that waved before her, Christina heedlessly broke it from the stalk to place it in her bodice. Then was heard a roaring of wild beasts, and, in an instant, two tremendous lions dashed from behind the thickets, and would have devoured them alive, but for the wonderful speed with which the white bear dashed ahead, carrying Christina on his back.

"Shall I cast away the golden lily, bear?" asked the maiden, as they drew near a second stream.

"No, keep it, love, since we have bought it so dear," answered the brave bear, redoubling his speed.

The lions were almost upon him, and one of them, springing at Christina, barely fell short, and grazed the bear's flank, inflicting a deep wound. The bear's great strength was too much for them, however. With a bound he reached the opposite bank of the stream they dared not cross.

The brave protector was now both weary and wounded. Christina bade him, as before, rest upon the soft moss, and lay his head upon her knees. She bathed his bleeding flank with her tears, and begged him to forgive her. The kind bear forgave her freely, and bade her find a certain herb which he said would heal his hurt. Christina sought till she found the herb, and with it bound up the wound, which quickly healed.

They resumed their journey, entering upon a third forest more vast and more beautiful than either of the others. In this wood, the leaves of the trees, their trunks, and every little stick and twig, were set with diamonds that glowed and sparkled gloriously. Christina's eyes were dazzled and her brain turned at sight of such beauty and magnificence. Unconsciously, her hand reached out to put aside a diamond wild-rose that brushed her cheek in passing; in doing so she broke it off. At once, a frightful groaning and roaring were heard in the thicket, at sound of which the brave bear trembled.

"It is the giant himself, the master of the three forests," he said; "and now, my love, kiss me upon the forehead, and I will fight for you until I die."

Terrified Christina kissed him upon the forehead, and with that, the giant rushed out of the wood, and attacked the bear with a huge club that might have felled an elephant to the ground. The combat lasted long and raged furiously; but the bear, by his skill and

bravery, proved a match for the giant, until the monster, seeing himself worsted, made an angry dash at Christina and would have killed her instantly, had not the bear, throwing himself in the way, received the fatal blow.

"When I die, find a way to throw my body into the giant's fountain," he whispered with his expiring breath. Christina, weeping, cast herself upon her kind friend's body, and the giant, seeing her so beautiful, declared that instead of killing her, he would make her his bride.

So Christina was taken home to his castle, and placed in a tower made of a single block of crystal, where the giant could see everything she did. From her tower she beheld the giant bathing his wounds received from the bear, in a little fountain that shot up in the courtyard underneath. As soon as the water touched him, he seemed quite restored and stronger than before.

"How can I have my poor bear's body carried to that fountain?" Christina mused sadly; but she dared not turn to the right or the left because of the eyes that watched her.

That night Christina bethought her of her golden whistle, and, softly blowing it, she saw emerge from the shadow of the trees around the fountain, a long train of bears walking two and two. Advancing beneath her window, the head bear touched his cap politely, asking what were her commands.

"In yonder wood you will find the remains of my dear friend the white bear," she said, sadly. "His last command was that his body should be cast into the fountain at your feet, and here am I, helpless, and a wretched prisoner at the giant's mercy."

"Fear nothing, lady," said the head bear. "This very moment we shall go to fetch the body of our lord. Lucky for him that you thought of blowing the whistle before sunrise of the coming day, for had you done so after that time, it would have been too late to bring him back to life."

The procession of bears went away, soon returning with the lifeless body of their chief. They cast him into the water of the fountain, and after a short time a bubbling sound was heard, and the white bear swam out again, looking as well and strong as ever.

Now was the time for the giant to arouse from his after-supper nap, and loud yawns and other noises were heard within the castle.

"Save me, oh ! save me, bear," cried Christina, looking like a rose in a crystal vase, as the admiring bear gazed up at her. "Don't leave me here, if you love me."

"*If* I love you!" cried the gallant bear.

He would have said more, but the giant, coming out, perceived his enemy at that moment, and immediately set upon him anew. The combat raged more furiously than before ; and Christina, gazing through her transparent wall, saw the bear wave his followers off, and bravely continue the fight single-handed. At length, the giant tumbled, crashing to earth like a falling oak-tree ; and the bear, with a cry of triumph, gave him a final mortal blow. Instructing the other bears to dig a grave and bury their enemy forthwith, where no one could find him, and perchance sprinkle him with water from the reviving fountain, the white bear again addressed Christina.

"You see that I have removed your worst enemy, my dear love, but there is much yet to be done. The crystal tower is enchanted, and only the giant could

have opened it. I had intended to wring from him before he died the spell by which to set you free, but his great strength threatened to overwhelm me; and I was forced to hasten matters, in order to save my life and yours. Far away, beyond the forests of jewels and of gold and of silver, through all of which I must needs pass again to reach her, dwells a wise woman who may tell me. Rest assured that I shall spare no pains to free you."

Christina sobbed bitterly as he bade her adieu and went away, followed by his attendants. There she was, a prisoner in the crystal tower, far above the reach of human aid. Fortunately, food and drink were not denied her, for a little fountain of clear water trickled into a silver basin fastened to the wall, and heaped-up cakes of fine white bread, together with rare conserved fruits, lay on a shelf at hand. At night, she might lie upon a swinging couch of purple silk, covered with linen soft as a rose-leaf—while, to amuse her, there were books of which the stories and pictures changed, as soon as one had read them, to others more charming. But, as we all know, nothing seems pleasant if we must enjoy it in solitude, when we long for society. For many days and nights, Christina awaited the return of her friend. At length, one day, he emerged from the wood, weary and bleeding, a small remnant of his faithful followers limping after him painfully. It required all the strength they could muster to reach the fountain and plunge into its waters; but alas! with the death of the giant, the magic of the fountain had ceased to work. Five of the bodies remained lifeless at the bottom of the water, and the white bear alone struggled to the margin, where, speaking in a feeble voice, he addressed Christina:

"Ah! dearest maiden, I am afraid our last hope is gone. After many dangers and difficulties, I reached the hut of the wise woman, who informed me that your only chance of being released from the crystal tower, is to use a talisman from each of the enchanted forests, upon the locks of the three doors. You know at what a cost such talismans are procured. In attempting to pick a leaf or twig from the trees, I and my band were set upon by the wolves, the lions, and a dragon who takes the giant's place in guarding the diamond forest; and the rest you know."

"Be of good cheer, my bear," cried the imprisoned maiden. "Have you forgotten that I retained the silver leaf, the golden lily, and the diamond rose?"

She ran to the door of the tower, and touched it with her silver leaf; it flew open, revealing a long flight of steps. On the second landing she found another door that yielded to the touch of the golden lily, revealing another flight of stairs. At the very bottom, was a door guarded by fierce dragons without and within, and Christina gave herself up for lost. But, waving the diamond rose, she advanced boldly, and the dragons within crouched at her feet. The last door flew open, and as the dragons without saw the talisman, they too fawned upon the lady. Joyfully, Christina rushed to the side of the bear, but to her horror, found him lifeless. In vain she sprinkled him with the water of the fountain. With the giant's death and burial, it had lost its magical powers. Christina cried bitterly, and then bethought her of consulting the dragons, who now appeared friendly enough. They carried the bear's body to the crystal tower room, and advised Christina to travel back through the enchanted forests to consult the wise woman.

"With your three talismans you need fear nothing," explained the dragons. "Perhaps you can get the wise woman to part with a little of her elixir of life."

Christina set out on her long journey, and travelled by night and by day, till she was footsore. In the diamond forest she was set upon as the bears had been, but the dragon bowed down before her talisman, and meekly followed in her train. In the golden forest the two lions became obedient; and in the silver forest the wolves also submitted to her power. All of them walked after her to the wise woman's house, with ears down and tails between their legs.

When the wise woman saw the strange procession, she wiped her spectacles, as she could hardly believe her eyes. Unfortunately, she was in one of her cross moods; so she shut the door in their faces, bidding Christina begone, and saying she would get no help from her.

The beasts, who were now Christina's slaves, bade her be of good cheer, as they would remain there to protect her until the wise woman should be induced to speak again and give the desired information.

The wise woman, who was in reality a witch of the worst kind, was considering how she should get Christina in her power. And, opening the door, she said in a mild voice:

"If I have anything to tell you, maiden, I can do it only after I shall have quenched my thirst and satisfied my hunger. On yonder hill-side flows a spring of purest wine. Send hither your dragons to fetch me a jugful of this wine, and I may try to help you."

Christina despatched the dragons willingly, and as they drew near the spring, both were seized with an overpowering desire to quaff its sparkling contents.

They drank their fill, and instantly went into a magic sleep upon the brink.

"While the dragons are in search of a beverage for me," said the crafty witch, "perhaps you won't mind sending your lions to my sheepfold in yonder meadow, to pick me out a nice fat lamb for roasting."

The lions, at a sign from Christina, trotted off, and no sooner had they reached the sheepfold, than they were overcome with a longing to eat some of the lambs they found there. At the first mouthful, the lions fell asleep upon the borders of the fold.

"There is only one thing more," remarked the witch. "My dinner will be incomplete without a plump little savory kid from the pasture up above. Send your wolves for that, and I shall be entirely at your service."

Christina obeyed, and the wolves, decoyed into temptation like their predecessors, were victims to their appetite for fresh kid. Now Christina was entirely unprotected, and the witch rejoiced.

"Long may you wait before your beasts return to you!" she cried, rushing out upon the helpless girl, and drawing her within the hut. Vainly Christina tried the powers of her talismans. The witch defied them all three, and the poor girl made up her mind to die.

"Give me but leave to sing the psalm we used to chant in our little village church," she said, weeping, "and I am ready to die."

The witch consented, and Christina sang. As the pure, sweet tones of her voice rose upon the air in the notes of the holy song, the witch was seized with a sudden trembling.

"Stop, for mercy's sake," she cried; but Christina only sang louder. Her powerful voice, penetrating the spot where her beasts lay under the witch's spell, broke

the power of the magic, and they were aroused at once and flew to Christina's rescue. The witch was, by this time, reduced to a weak and shuddering state, and crouched in a corner in abject fear.

"Ask what you will, only be silent," she cried. So Christina demanded a vial of the elixir of life, which the witch bade her find upon one of the shelves ; and then the maiden, followed by her protecting train, wended her way in safety from the dangerous spot.

Arrived at the crystal tower, Christina discovered her friend the white bear, lying stretched as she had left him. Quickly opening the vial above his head, a vapor like steam filled the room, accompanied by a powerful scent of roses. Christina saw nothing until the air was clear, when lo! instead of the bear, she beheld a young and handsome knight, who had been long enchanted in this shape. By mistake, for the elixir of life she had taken a vial containing a fluid of the witch's own concoction, warranted to restore to natural shape all victims of enchantment, and endowing them, also, with perpetual health and youth.

Christina and her knight went in search of his bewitched companions, and restored them too to life and vigor.

The marriage took place very soon after, and they became King and Queen of the three enchanted forests and of the crystal tower.

"Is that a real folk tale?" Regi asked, when the porringer had finished.

"Well, you must not press me too closely on that point," answered the little silver dish, good-humoredly. "The part about the three forests and the girl escap-

ing through them on the bear is genuine, certainly. If elsewhere I rambled on according to my fancy, you must remember that my intention, at any rate, was good."

"Were you owned by anybody great?" pursued the investigating Regi.

"My mistress was a great hand to weave fine linen, if that's what you mean. My master worked in a match factory, and was as nice and honest a fellow as ever I saw. I was sorry enough when they broke up their little home to emigrate to America, and sold me to a dealer. They felt badly about it too, but they needed every penny for the voyage."

"Where do you suppose they are now?" inquired Regi.

"Where are the waves that break upon the shore?" returned the porringer, sentimentally. "Suppose I tell you the right name of the story of the Three Forests. It is *De tre Under-skogarne.* Does that make it real enough to suit you?"

THE SWISS CLOCK'S STORY.

"CUCKOO! Cuckoo!" said a busy little gentleman, popping his head out of an open door. "It's time somebody asked *me* to tell all I know. Pray, what is the use of my stepping up every half-hour to remind you that I am here, if I'm never to have a chance to speak?"

"I'm ready, if you are, Mr. Cuckoo," answered Regi, laughing at his fussy little ways.

"In a certain valley, in view of a lake fed by the noisy waters of a glacier stream, I saw the light," said the cuckoo, who inhabited a carved Swiss clock, hanging upon the wall of the Standish drawing-room. "The house my maker lived in, was one of a village of wooden dwellings, with overhanging roofs kept in place by large stones, and built so close together that one could almost shake hands with his neighbor across the street by leaning from the window. This was to provide against the tremendous gusts of wind that swept their streets in winter, threatening to lift the roof, and leave the people inside in the state I have seen your Noah's ark animals in, when the top of their abode was taken off."

"It's a long time since you have seen me with a Noah's ark," put in Regi, with a blush of resentment at the belittling suggestion.

"I came from your old home, if you please," said the

cuckoo in the clock; "and I have reason to believe that if my carving had not been something unusually rare, I should have been shut out of this fine room. I hope you will bear in mind that I knew you when you were, comparatively speaking, in the flower of youth."

"I suppose I did play with toys when I was a little fellow," answered his hearer. "But go on, please, and tell me more about that funny town you lived in."

Most of the houses had carved balconies running around them; and up under the eaves of the roofs hung corn, put there to dry for the food of the ground-floor tenants, consisting, in the cold season, of cows, horses, goats and poultry, who lived separated from the family above only by a flooring of thin planks. The cart was kept in the yard leaning against the house wall, and when they wanted to harness the horse to it, he had only to step out of one of the doorways of the universal dwelling. Nothing could be more convenient when the great snows fell.

In this, my native village, there were several expert wood-carvers, of whom my maker was the chief. Sometimes they would band together to work and chat, and there it was that I heard many interesting details about the habits of a race of dwarfs, or Hill-men, once inhabiting the clefts and caverns of the surrounding mountains. They were reputed to be friendly enough to deserving people, but had no scruple about flying into a terrible rage, if their wills were crossed. In winter, when the outer world was one vast desolation of ice and snow and frowning granite; when only the great glacier dividing the heights, lit at morning and at evening with a rosy glow from the sun, recalled the

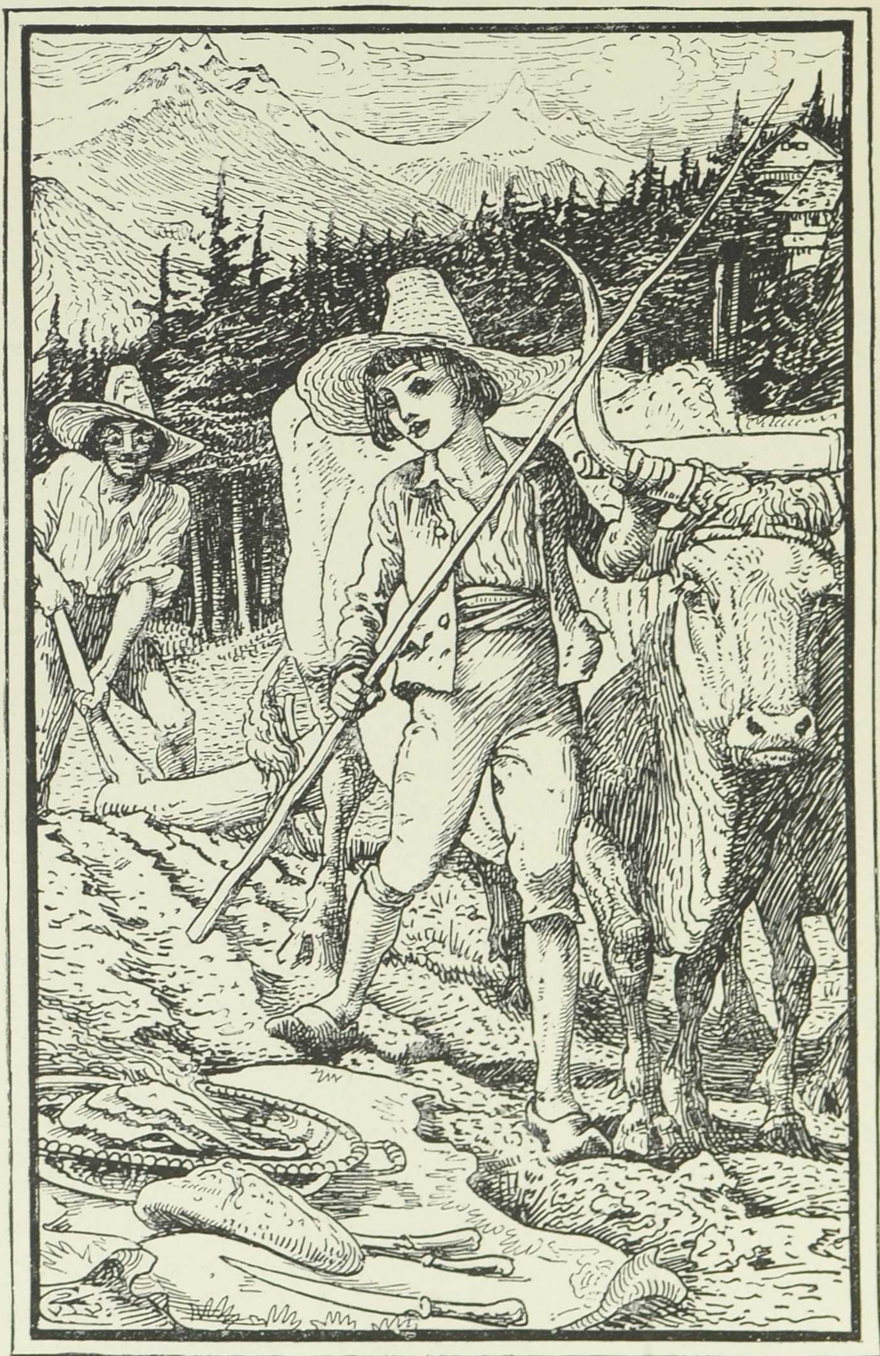
pictures of the summer ; when howling winds bent the fir-trees low upon the cliffs, above the awful chasms they seemed to guard ; then, the Hill-men were never seen abroad. More to the taste of the wise and prudent little people were their own firesides, many a fathom deep within the rocks, where they sat, 'twas said, under arches of pure gold, in palaces made of rock-crystal, gleaming with a thousand brilliant hues.

It was in the spring, after the unfettered avalanche and torrent had done their destructive work of plunging down precipice and ravine, sweeping away houses, fences, trees, bridges, living creatures—every hapless thing that crossed their path—that the Hill-men carefully unbarred their mountain-doors to sally forth. For, in Switzerland, you must know, while the snow-shrouds are still clinging to the steep mountain-sides, the fields and forests become green as emerald, the grass is gemmed with innumerable flowers, and strawberries appear high up on the hills, at the very edge of the snow-crust. Those little Swiss flowers understand that they are expected to put their best foot foremost, in spite of adverse circumstances. They bloom persistently in the oddest places ; you find a tuft of violets pushing from under a rock covered with snow at midsummer ; the red and purple gletscherblume, grows beneath the icicles of a glacier ; the edelweiss—flower, leaf and stem looking as if cut from white velvet—loves the snowy regions. Farther down are gentians and gentianellas, those sapphire beauties of the Alps ; rocks carpeted with pink heather ; tall sword-ferns in abundance ; masses of moss and lichens—and of Alp rose, with its shining leaves bronzed on the under side. Our people used to say that the Hill-men plant out these blossoms, and watch and tend them, which ac-

counts for their hardiness. The patches of rich short grass, found here and there in barren spots strewn with boulders, were the grazing places of an especial breed of chamois kept by the little folks to provide them with milk for their famous cheeses. Lucky the peasant who discovered one of these dainties left beside his door, since, when a slice or a bite was taken from it, the Hill-wives' cheese grew out again, and thus proved ever-lasting, besides melting in one's mouth with a delicious flavor.

A merry fellow and full of roguish tricks, was the Swiss Hill-man, spite of his hot temper. He was compassionate and generous, too. Many a stray lamb did he drive back to the fold, and many a shepherd guide to where his missing herds were grazing. If a weak child were sent by its parents to fetch home firewood, often would it find a neatly made bundle of brush lying across the forest-path. Sometimes a poor old crone would discover in her hay-shed a dozen pearly eggs where she had hoped for but one ; and, anon, at the elbow of the toiling woodsman mysteriously appeared a bowl of frothing milk.

One of the pleasant stories about the valley-roaming dwarfs, was as follows : One day, an honest laborer named Barthel went out with his little son to plough a field which he meant to sow with corn. Barthel was not a skilled hand with the plough, and he felt very anxious about the success of his undertaking, since, latterly, all his sheep had died of a pestilence, and poverty was staring him in the face. From dawn till noon, the two worked patiently, turning the grassy soil in furrows, the sweat rolling from their foreheads. The boy, who was very tired, stopped to rest, when, on looking over at the rocky heights beyond, he beheld



"There lay a silver dish, heaped with roast beef, and beside it a loaf of bread."

smoke rising from a hill-top, while the air was filled with the smell of savory cooking.

"Look, father!" cried the lad. "There is the smoke from the Hill-men's kitchen. No doubt they are making ready for a feast. How good their cooking smells, when one has had nothing to eat but a crust of bread since morning! Ah! if we had but one little dish—whether roast, boiled, or baked I care not—out of their plenty!"

The father sighed, for he had nothing to give his child, and silently ploughed on, when lo! a miracle appears! There, right in the middle of a furrow, upon a napkin of fine white linen, lay a silver dish, heaped with roast beef, and beside it a loaf of bread.

"Hurrah! long live the generous dwarfs!" cried father and son together. They ate plentifully of the substantial meal, and were careful to put the silver platter, the knife, fork and napkin back where they had been found. By the time, refreshed and vigorous, they had made the round of the field again, every one of the belongings of the dwarfs had vanished, excepting the damask cloth. This they took home, as a token of luck to come, and for many generations the curious little cloth was handed down in Barthel's family. From the day of their unexpected feast, Barthel and his son prospered in all their enterprises, coming in time to be the rich folk of the neighborhood.

"That was splendid!" cried Regi, clapping his hands. "Tell us another, can't you?"

"I will tell you about the dwarf in search of a lodging," said the cuckoo, pleased with his success.

One night, during a tremendous storm of wind and rain, there came to a village not far from the borders of a lake, a grotesque-looking traveller, bent in the back till he appeared no taller than a child of seven. From house to house he wandered, asking humbly for shelter from the storm, his shabby clothes dripping with rain, and his limbs trembling from fatigue. "Get you gone!" answered one villager after another, slamming the door in his face. "We want no vagabonds here."

The weary stranger followed the single village street to its end; and, standing there, was about to launch a curse upon the heartless inhabitants, when he espied ahead of him a light in the small window of an isolated cottage. This was the dwelling of a poor shepherd and his wife, upon whose poverty their well-to-do neighbors looked down with scorn. Tired and faint, the dwarf, leaning on his staff, crept to where he saw the light, and tapped modestly three times upon the window. At once, the door opened and the shepherd, standing upon the threshold, peered into the stormy darkness.

"Who is there?" he asked, in a kind voice. "If it be a fellow-being abroad in such a night, in heaven's name let him come in and partake of the little we can give, in the way of food and shelter."

So saying, he led the traveller to the seat he had just vacated by the fire. The wife, bustling about, took the streaming cap and mantle off to dry, while she scraped together the poor remnants of food and drink the cupboard could afford. Truth to tell, what she found there was all her husband and herself had expected to subsist on next day; but, giving no thought to the morrow, she produced bread, goat's milk, and a rind of cheese, and set it before the dwarf.

"I thank you kindly, good wife," said the stranger, sipping a few drops of the milk, and eating a few crumbs of bread with a peculiar smile upon his face. "My appetite at best is very poor ; but your supper is better than a feast, offered, as it is, in such a spirit."

When he had eaten and drank, the dwarf made her put away what remained upon the shelf ; after which, walking with surprising agility across the floor, he whispered a few words into the cupboard.

"Be not surprised, my friends," he said. "By to-morrow you will see that I am not ungrateful for your charity ;" and, taking his cap and staff and mantle, he prepared to go away.

"God forbid that you should leave us," cried the worthy pair, in concert. "We will give you our bed, and we can easily rest here in chairs beside the fire."

But the dwarf, shaking his head, would not be persuaded to remain. He went out into the storm, and the shepherd, standing upon the sill to look after him, fancied he saw a shape, erect and powerful, waving his arms with angry gestures toward the sleeping villagers below.

The worthy pair retired to rest, but at break of day they were aroused by a furious tempest. Lightning flashed through the sky, thunder rolled and crashed unceasingly, and torrents of water swept down the hills toward the valley. From their window, the shepherd and his wife saw a huge rock break from the mountain top above the village, and roll swiftly upon the houses beneath, carrying with it tons of earth and stones, and an entire forest of trees, torn up by the roots. Another moment, and the village, with all that it contained, was buried forever from sight.

Now the lake swelled beyond its boundary, and sent

great waves higher and higher upon the slope. The downward torrent, rushing to meet it, had almost reached their cottage door, and the couple, clinging in terror to each other, prepared for instant death. What was their relief to see, floating down the middle of the descending stream that threatened to engulf them, an immense rock, astride of which, steering it with the trunk of a pine-tree, sat the friendly dwarf to whom, the night before, they had given food and shelter.

"Hallo there, friends!" he shouted merrily. "Have no fear!" and skilfully he directed the rock till it rested against the side wall of the cottage, making a breakwater around which the furious current parted, to leave the couple and their home in safety.

As they looked out in astonished thankfulness, they beheld the dwarf expand to the size of a monstrous giant and vanish in the air. In a short time, while yet the shepherd and his wife were singing a hymn of gratitude for their deliverance, the sun shone, the birds sang, and the heavens were blue and clear. Of the village and its inhabitants, not a sign was seen, the receding waters of the lake having carried everything away, in token of the dwarf's revenge. When the shepherd's wife went to her cupboard to get the breakfast, she found there a whole loaf of excellent brown bread, a jug of fresh goat's milk, and a delicious cheese. So long as the couple lived, these good things never failed them. Eat as bountifully as they might, there was just as much as before, when they had finished.

"Good!" cried Regi, gleefully. "I always think 'brown loaves of bread,' 'fresh milk,' and 'cottage cheese,' sound so nice in books and stories; but when

they come to give me nothing else for tea I don't like it at all. Why didn't the dwarf put a pot of strawberry jam in the cupboard, whilst he was about it?"

"It would have been just as easy to him, no doubt," answered the cuckoo; "but perhaps he thought it was best not to put new notions into the heads of people who were satisfied with what they had. If you are not tired of the dwarfs, I have another anecdote for you, about the way the little Hill-men came to disappear from the neighborhood in which I lived."

"I am not a bit tired. But first, I want to tell you that I know a story a good deal like that one about the flood. It's in my Wonder Book, and the couple were named Philemon and Baucis, and Quicksilver left them grapes and honeycomb to eat. But they lived in Greece, I think," said the child, trying to recall his scattered memories.

"I know nothing whatever about them," said the cuckoo, rather stiffly. "I simply undertook to give you the traditions of my own country, and I have done so. Beyond one's own country there is little that is interesting, I believe."

"It's well I don't think that!" cried Regi, with a bright face. "But now for the little Hill-people."

Time out of mind, as I have said, the ancestors of the men who sat at their carving in my native place, had been in the habit of receiving from the dwarfs a number of friendly services. Sometimes the country people, coming out to their work in the gray of morning, would find their fields nicely ploughed, their cows milked and driven to pasture, their gardens dug and planted; while the dwarfs, hidden behind the bushes,

would laugh until their sides ached, at the astonishment of the rustics. Often they found their corn, as yet hardly ripe, cut and stacked ; and while they were complaining that it had been harvested too soon, there was pretty sure to come on a hail-storm that would assuredly have destroyed the whole crop, had not the clever dwarfs looked out for them. Rarely did the little people permit any one to catch a glimpse of them. It was a saying in those parts, that if one of the dwarfs was seen bent over and gliding by, wrapped in a long mantle, sickness or misfortune was soon to strike some one in the vicinity. But if anybody chanced to get a peep at the Hill-men when, adorned with flowers, and carrying green branches, they danced and sported in the meadows, it meant a good year for crops, herds and game, and general prosperity. As an ordinary thing, the peasants avoided trying to spy upon their sprightly neighbors ; but as there are always people to make mischief in this world by prying, the curiosity of one man brought trouble on all the others.

A certain farmer owned a cherry-tree that was the admiration of his friends. Tall, symmetrical, and filled with fruit, it stood knee-deep in a field of flax overrun with poppies, corn-flowers, and vetches blue and purple, that rippled like a sea of blossoms in the summer wind. Regularly, every year, when it was time to pick the cherries, the farmer found the tree stripped, and the fruit spread on benches and boards to dry for the winter, excepting that portion of it reserved for immediate use or sale. Of course this could only be the work of the good-natured Hill-men, and nobody in the house thought of trying to watch them, except, at last, a shepherd lad, recently engaged to work about the place. Some gossip had told him that the dwarfs wore long

trailing mantles to conceal their goose-feet, of which they were ashamed ; and the shepherd determined to find out the truth of this story for himself. Accordingly, one July night, when the cherries were about ready to be picked, the shepherd crept to the tree and strewed the ground beneath with ashes. Hiding behind a stone, he saw a number of little men in long mantles swarm over the tree, denude it of its fruit, and then, descending, trip lightly over to the spot where the cherries were left to dry. When daylight came, sure enough, the ashes beneath the tree were marked with goose-feet, and the foolish shepherd, not content with having found out the dwarfs' secret, told it far and near, with malicious laughter. Needless to say, the dwarfs never again came near the farmer's house. Next year the cherry-tree failed to bear fruit, the shepherd lad was struck with a grievous sickness, and the farmer's luck deserted him. After this occurrence, the Hill-people who had frequented that neighborhood, are said to have shut themselves up in their underground abodes, disgusted with mankind. At any rate, no one has ever been found who could boast that he had seen them, since that night.

"I don't think they ought to have been angry with everybody because of that meddling shepherd," said Regi.

"I dare say his was not the only offence. There was a report that in one place where the Hill-men were in the habit of coming down in parties to watch the hay-making, a stupid fellow, discovering that they used to perch like so many birds on the limb of a maple-tree, to look on, hiding behind the foliage—came by

night and sawed the branch nearly through. Next morning, the dwarfs, suspecting nothing, climbed into the tree as usual, and the branch snapped in two, throwing them to the ground, and bruising them severely."

"That was mean!" said Regi.

"So the dwarfs thought; and off they went in high dudgeon, never showing themselves there again. Another trick, played upon the poor little men, was somewhat similar. In another neighborhood, where they watched the hay-makers in harvest time, they used to sit upon a large flat rock. Some mischievous people kindled a fire upon the rock, making it very hot, and then swept away the ashes. When the dwarfs came there and sat down, they were very badly burnt. Full of wrath, they cried out that they should be avenged, then disappeared for ever."

"That was pretty bad," remarked the boy; "but in the end, the dwarfs always had the best of it. Oh! I wish I had a dwarf friend to come to see me now and then. Don't you?"

"Cuckoo, Cuckoo, Cuckoo, Cuckoo, Cuckoo, Cuckoo!" was the answer, which Regi rightly interpreted to be a sign that his tea was ready; and however much Regi liked to hear about Hill-people, he was generally in a healthy state of hunger when six o'clock came.

THE GERMAN CHÂTELAINE'S STORY.

"I CAN'T make up my mind," said the little boy, addressing himself to an object that lay under glass upon a plush cushion, "whether you ought to tell me one big story, or a good many little ones."

Regi's uncertainty arose from the fact that this curio was an ancient châtelaine or massive clasp of beaten silver, meant to be worn at a lady's girdle, from which depended sundry little chains each furnished with a key, scissors, thimble, or other silver ornament. Miss Lynch had told him that, in mediæval days in Germany, the chief lady of a noble household wore one of these useful appendages when going the rounds of her domestic duties; and he had often handled the pretty dangling things admiringly.

"I confess that amid your gossips, who—with the single exception of Madame la Marquise, the French fan—were peasants, and have been babbling so freely about their humble beginnings, I feel decidedly out of place; and whatever I may narrate will have to deal with a higher class of society," the châtelaine said, loftily. "Perhaps I may recall a legend of the Suabian country, as I heard it told to the little counts and countesses in my ancestral castle, by their tutor, who was fond of ancient stories, and you may call it 'The Lady of the Fountain.'"

In the immediate neighborhood of Blackpool, in Suabia, there once dwelt a valiant knight and doughty freebooter, who was the scourge and terror of all wayfaring merchants or carriers whose business led them in his direction. A terrible fellow was Owlfinger, when he took the road. With vizor down, cuirass adjusted to his stalwart form, sword girt about his loins, and golden spurs tinkling at his heels, his heart became like steel to rapine and to bloodshed. In those days, many of the nobility took it upon themselves to judge of other men's rights to hold property, and as they were rich and well supplied with men and arms to back them, the question was settled simply enough, by the weak giving way to the strong. When the cry arose, "Owlfinger is abroad," all Suabia was in a state of agitation; the peasants flocked into the fortified towns, and the watchmen at the gates blew their horns loud and long, to give warning of danger in the air.

Quite another person was Owlfinger in his domestic character. A loving husband, a kind master, "hospitable as an Arab, and gentle as a lamb," he had been styled. As for his wife, the lady Matilda, she was a pattern of goodness and amiability. Added to this, she was the most industrious of housewives, and, when her husband sallied forth upon professional business, she would not stand looking at herself in the glass, or trying on new clothes, but sat down at her wheel to draw the flax out in a thread of wondrous fineness. Poor Matilda, though she never lectured her freebooting lord, could not resign herself to his dreadful habits; when he brought prisoners gagged and bound into the house, she often contrived to set them free, after restoring to them as much as she dared of their stolen goods. For some years after her marriage,

Matilda had no child, which was to her affectionate heart a source of continual regret. She thought that, if Owlfinger had something to make his gloomy castle more bright and cheery, he would be more willing to give up his wild raids upon the passers-by, or upon distant travellers.

One evening, at the close of a summer's day, when she sat waiting her lord's return in her usual state of anxiety, Matilda repeatedly sent a page up to where a dwarf kept watch upon the tower, to ask if there were no sign of Owlfinger's arrival. As the hours passed, and not a cloud of dust arose on the horizon, no clatter of horses' hoofs was heard upon the road, no wild shouts or merry chorus struck the listening ear, Matilda, nervous and fearful, determined to go out for a stroll in the neighboring woods. Not far from the castle was a natural grotto of rocks overgrown with moss and ferns and periwinkle, and paved with pebbles that shone like precious stones. In the centre of this grotto arose the jet of a fountain, springing to the height of several feet in a crystal column, falling again into a basin of rock, and then running bubbling away, to be lost in the heart of the forest. If tradition told the truth, the fountain was haunted by a Nix-lady, who watched over the fortunes of the inmates of the castle, and who, every time they were threatened with disaster, made her appearance, to walk hither and thither wringing her hands and weeping bitterly. Matilda, who, often as she had heard this tale, quite disbelieved it, was now terrified to find, sitting at the entrance of the cave, the airy form of a woman in distress.

"This must be the lady of the fountain," she cried, dropping upon a mossy rock. "And without doubt, some accident has happened to my poor misguided

husband. Spite of all his faults I love him tenderly, and if he has fallen in conflict I do not wish to survive him."

At this, the phantom threw back a misty veil, revealing a lovely, sympathetic face, and in a soft and rippling voice, she spoke.

"Do not fear, lady, your husband is safe, and will soon return to you. Alas! that I should have to say it, it is you who will be called first away. In a short time you will have a daughter, and, after her birth, your stay on earth cannot long endure. Many a time have I watched you shedding sad tears to mingle with my waters; and I have wished to comfort you, but it was not allowed. If I speak now it is to assure you of my sympathy, and to offer my protection to your child. Be sure that I can be to her a powerful ally, if I am but permitted to act as one of her godmothers at the christening. Make Owlfinger promise you this before you go, and instruct one of your trusted women to come to the fountain at the time appointed for the christening, and throw in it the pebble I now bestow on you."

Matilda took the pebble dropped into her palm by the Nix-lady's cool white fingers, and the vision melted from sight. Then the doomed countess retraced her steps to the castle, where a hubbub of stamping horses, dogs, horns, clank of steel and roistering voices, announced the return of Owlfinger, bearing on this occasion a richer prize than usual.

In a short time Matilda had a little girl, small as a fairy, and exquisitely formed. When Owlfinger came in the room to visit his baby, although he would have much preferred a boy to bring up to imitate his own mode of life, the burly freebooter kissed the infant af-

fectionately, asking her mother if there were no boon she would favor him by asking. The countess, who felt her strength ebbing fast, begged that he would permit her to present for the child a godmother of her own choosing, without inquiry or remonstrance. Owlfinger swore that he would not interfere, "Be it the Nix-lady of the fountain herself, whom you select!" A few days later Matilda died, to the astonishment and distress of all, including her husband, who declared between his sobs that she had always been too good for him, or indeed for anybody upon earth.

When the day of the christening came, the trusted maid-servant of the late countess went, according to instructions, alone, into the forest, and, casting the pebble into the fountain, hurried off, too much frightened to look back. By the time she reached the castle, everybody was talking about a beautiful and splendid stranger lady, who had just arrived to be the baby's godmother. She had come in a chariot shaped like a shell, drawn by horses with sea-green manes and tails. Her gown was of shimmering green silk; and her veil of white gauze, dotted all over with seed-pearls, flowed to her very feet. Strangely enough, the ladies noticed that the hems of her veil and gown were both dripping wet, which appeared not to incommode her in the least. At sight of this wonderful personage, the dames and knights present made way for her to take the highest place in the room, bowing profoundly as they did so. Owlfinger, his head bent on his breast, and wrapped in gloomy thoughts of the departed, paid no attention to the new-comer, and the baptismal ceremony at once began. The stranger, taking the baby from her nurse's arms, held her before the priest; and when the child's name was asked for, gave it as "Ma-

tilda." So Matilda the little one became. After the ceremony, according to custom, the friends of the family passed in order by the child's cradle, laying within it their gifts. Many and handsome were the presents thus displayed, but when the stranger godmother came, last of all, to bestow her offering, all eyes were turned in curiosity to see the magnificent token she assuredly would give. Gliding up to the child with an undulating step, the unknown lady placed in its hand an insignificant ball, made of boxwood, of a pattern used to carry about perfumes in the pocket; then, bending to bestow a light kiss upon the infant's forehead, she quitted the apartment. Dames and attendants were equally solicitous to see what the ball contained, supposing it held some jewels of extraordinary rarity. Upon unscrewing it, however, they found nothing inside, a fact eliciting several comments of a severe nature upon the parsimony of the stranger godmother. The nurse put the boxwood ball away in a box containing ornaments belonging to her late mistress, and, in time, the poor little present was forgotten.

For several weeks, Owlfinger indulged in deep gloom over the loss of his wife, even going so far, out of respect to her memory, as to give up his favorite raids. But in time his load of grief was considerably lightened, and, by way of a morning's pastime, he one day ordered his horse and followers to be made ready, proposing to have a gallop, merely for exercise, in the direction of the high road. Returning from this jaunt, the reformed freebooter happened to espy a party of merchants jogging peacefully along with a heavy convoy of goods before them. Entirely through force of habit, Owlfinger, uttering a shout of triumph, dashed upon them, killing, wounding, or making prisoners the

various members of the party, and possessing himself of their treasures. After this, the old life began again, and, feeling cheered and buoyant, he bethought himself of taking a second spouse. His choice fell on a young person in every respect a contrast to the Lady Matilda. The new wife was dark and showy, high spirited and fond of dress and company. The household, after the bride came into it, was entirely remodelled. Nothing was heard of but gaiety and extravagance, banquets and carousals. As fast as Owlfinger brought home fresh stores of booty, his wife wasted them upon her pleasures. When she could get hold of nothing more from him, she betook herself to ransacking the first wife's property, laid aside in chests for the benefit of her daughter. To the poor little Matilda, the countess took the greatest possible aversion, exiling her with her nurse to a remote part of the castle, and ordering that the tiresome brat be never allowed to come into her presence. Fortunately for Matilda, her attendant was a kind, hearty woman, who took good care of her.

One day, when Matilda was playing with her doll on a grass plot beneath the castle windows, a ball flew through the air and lighted on the turf at her feet. Running to pick it up, she took forthwith, as children often do, a great fancy to this simple plaything, carrying it in her frock all day and sleeping with it clasped in her little hand at night. No one knew or cared how she came by the trifle, but the fact was that, that afternoon, the countess, happening to be in one of her rummaging moods, had come across a case of jewels, hidden in an old escritoire belonging to her predecessor. With covetous delight, she turned the contents out upon a table, finding there far more than she dared to hope for. Sparkling rings, pendants, bracelets,

lockets, necklaces, all set with valuable diamonds, came to view. At the bottom of the casket was a wooden ball, which she tried to unscrew, but failed. Believing it to be an old and worn-out scent-ball, she tossed it disdainfully out of the window, while her eager fingers closed upon the new-found treasures. These she at once proceeded to convey to her own quarters, without asking any questions.

Little Matilda, carrying her ball, went a few days after for a walk with her nurse in the forest. As the weather was very warm, the woman took her charge into the grotto for refreshment, and, while there, the child begged her to go back to the castle in search of cake, that they might make a feast.

"You will promise me not to stir from this spot?" asked the nurse, and Matilda, promising submissively, was soon left alone. Taking out her ball she amused herself by tossing it in the air, but on the third attempt to catch it the ball rolled into the fountain.

At this the surface of the clear water rippled gently, and up rose a woman's form veiled from head to foot in shimmering gauze, through whose transparent folds the child beheld the loveliest of faces smiling sweetly upon her.

"I am here, dearest little one—I—your own godmother," said the Nix-lady, and her voice had in it the music of falling waters. "Here is your ball. Take it, and keep it carefully. Never play with it again, for the time will come when it shall fulfil for you four of your dearest wishes. When you are older, I will explain to you much that now you could not understand. But this you can readily remember: whenever you want to see me, come to this fountain, and cast a pebble into the basin, and I shall immediately answer."

"'I am here, dearest little one — I — your own godmother,' said the Nix-lady."

Matilda, who was an uncommonly quick-witted small person, thanked the nymph very prettily, took her ball, and promised to obey directions. Thereupon, the lady kissed her fondly, and talked to her so delightfully as to enchant the little creature. Never had she been made so happy by companionship. When the footsteps of the anxious nurse were heard returning rapidly, the Nix-lady, saying good-by, melted into the foam wreaths of the fountain.

From that day forth, Matilda contrived many a pretext for visiting the grotto. As this retreat had also been her mother's favorite, the nurse was the more willing to indulge her charge. Nothing could have been more quiet and secluded than the spot, so that gradually, Matilda was allowed to go there when she wished, alone. Then, quick as thought, a pebble was dropped into the pellucid pool, and up came the Nix godmother, always smiling, always gentle, always full of charming talk. Gradually, as the years rolled on, Matilda, denied by the meanness of her step-mother the advantages she should have had, was taught by her careful godmother all that was necessary to make her an accomplished woman. While the wicked countess believed the girl to be growing up as ignorant as a kitchen wench, Matilda was, in reality, fit to take her place at court, had she been called upon to do so.

When Matilda had reached the age of seventeen, she was the most bewitching of maidens, with the freshness of a dew-besprinkled rose. Living as she did apart from the rest of the family, she knew little of what was going on, but that little was not of a pleasant nature. Owlfinger, from being a gay and gallant knight, had become sullen and morose, while his many deeds of violence abroad had so outraged the com-

munity, that the Suabian authorities determined at last to put a stop to them at any price. Although repeatedly warned, he still spent his days in robbery and bloodshed, his nights in feasting and drunkenness. Instead of restraining her husband, the countess urged him to fresh attempts at plunder, in order to supply means to gratify her own extravagance. Rumors of an intended attack upon the castle were abroad, but of these Matilda knew nothing, when, at the close of one afternoon, she set out to visit her beloved godmother. When she reached the grotto there was no need to summon the Nixie, since there she sat, wringing her hands and weeping bitterly.

"Dear godmother, what ails you?" cried the alarmed maiden.

"Woe to the house of Owlfinger!" said the nymph, in an altered voice. "Have you never heard the tradition of the castle? When danger threatens it, then must I be on hand to weep and wail. Go, my poor child, and keep watch for the change that is soon to come. Whatever betides, hold fast to your ball, and when you are in extremity of need, appeal to it. More than this I cannot do for you, but mark my warning: when the day comes that the women, who are sent here to fetch pitchers of water from my spring, find the fountain dry, then prepare for danger, and may Heaven watch over you!"

So saying, she disappeared. Matilda, in great distress, called on her to return, in vain. No answer was vouchsafed. A few days after, the maidens who went out at twilight for water from the fountain, came running back, pale and terrified, with empty pitchers in their hands reporting that not only had the fountain gone dry, but a lady in white sat beside it, wringing

her hands and uttering deep sighs. At this news, alarm spread over the entire castle, and Matilda, remembering the warning of the nymph, shut herself up in her own chamber, uncertain what next to do. That same night, a body of troops marched upon the castle, and attacked it. Owlfinger, mustering his retainers, defended the place valiantly, although aroused from a drunken orgie by the call to arms. On both sides the cross-bowmen sent their deadly shafts flying thick and fast; rams shattered the bastions of the castle, and many were the dead and wounded. At length a bolt pierced Owlfinger's vizor, and lodged deep in his brain. As the terrible freebooter fell dead, a panic seized upon his supporters; they wavered, and the besieging party perceiving this, rallied for a final assault. Over the walls they clambered, crashing through the gate and rushing over the drawbridge, to hoist their flag upon the ramparts. The terrified garrison were cut to pieces, and the castle was ransacked and set on fire. In the end, not one stone of it was left upon another.

The wicked countess, in trying to escape, fell a victim to her own haughty spirit. Refusing to yield, she was struck down by a soldier, and her body was cast into the moat beside her husband's. From the window of her turret chamber, Matilda watched the progress of the siege. When smoke and flame drove her forth to seek safety, she clasped in her hand the boxwood ball, repeating a formula taught her by her godmother,

> "Light before me, shade behind,
> So may I deliverance find."

Although surrounded by embruted soldiery thirsting to destroy every member of the terrible Owlfinger family, Matilda passed unseen. Sick of the scene of

carnage, she quickened her footsteps to a run as soon as she had reached the wood. How long she fled, she knew not, or in what direction. Pausing at nightfall beneath the shelter of an oak in an open field, she laid herself down, utterly exhausted and despairing, upon the turf. Turning her eyes to the quarter from which she came, she beheld the sky red with the lurid glow of her burning home. Unable to bear the sight, she closed her eyes, and soon fatigue made her drop asleep.

Before the morning dew had fallen, Matilda, awaking in affright, remembered where she was. Staggering to her feet, she found her way to a neighboring cottage, where the woman, a compassionate soul, gave her food and milk, and a place to rest in. Matilda decided to tell her new friend who she was, and to take advice from her, since, under present circumstances, no offshoot of the house of Owlfinger could hope to go at large unmolested. The good woman, pitying her sincerely, advised her to put on humble clothing, and to seek employment in some family. Matilda's garments were sold privately, and with the money thus obtained she purchased an outfit of servant's clothes, the woman undertaking to find her a situation.

Unfortunately, at this season, few respectable people were found to be hiring servants. Matilda's friend could only hear of one house where they were in need, and that was the mansion of Count Conrad, a distinguished young knight, chancellor and champion of the city of Augsburg, close at hand. During a greater part of the year, the count was absent from home, and his establishment was under the absolute charge of Frau Gertrude, a housekeeper of such shrewish temper that no maid could endure life in the same house with her. Gertrude was a widow of sixty, with a red nose, a wasp

waist, wearing a wig of jet black curls, and possessing a tongue warranted to scold so long as the unfortunate object of her wrath was in hearing. Notwithstanding this vicious disposition, the housekeeper was a proverb for honesty and neatness. Her industry kept her for ever astir, and Count Conrad's house shone with polishing and scrubbing, while his meals were excellently cooked and served.

One day, Frau Gertrude had discovered some petty offence on the part of her chief housemaid ; and this had brought about such a domestic earthquake that, by night, every maid in the house had taken leave. It was to Gertrude that Matilda, disguised in a coarse stuff gown, a hump fastened on her left shoulder, her skin stained brown, and her beautiful auburn hair hidden under an unbecoming cap, went to ask for employment. As soon as the old hag saw her approach the door, it was slammed in Matilda's face, with the shrill order to begone, as they wanted no idle hussies begging at that house.

"I don't ask for charity, my lady," said Matilda ; "I ask for work, and if you try me, you shall see what a faithful servant I can be."

Flattered by this style of address, Frau Gertrude pulled the door open, surveying her through the crack.

"And pray who are you, and whence came you ?" she asked, in a milder tone.

"I am an orphan, my lady, and my name is Matilda ;

> "I'm a stout girl and nimble,
> Can manage the thimble,
> Can spin, card and knit,
> Can handle the spit,
> Can bake, stew and brew,
> Am honest and true,
> And am here to serve you."

"You must be a gypsy, with that brown skin," said the woman, eyeing her narrowly.

"If I am so unfortunate as to belong to that race, whom nobody will trust, it is all the more reason for me to try to please you," persisted the girl.

So, the end of it was, Matilda was engaged upon the spot, a silver shilling was put into her hand as token of the bargain made, and she took possession of the empty kitchen. Wonderful to relate, Frau Gertrude could find no excuse for scolding her. Days passed, Matilda did the work of all the departed maids, was up early, went to bed late, left no stone unturned to please her mistress. Frau Gertrude's tongue grew rusty in its hinges!

They lived thus quietly during the summer and autumn. About the time when the first snow fell, preparations began to be made for the arrival of the master of the house, who, attended by a troop of idle servants, and a train of hounds and horses, returned to Augsburg to take up his abode for the winter months. Suites of unused rooms were thrown open, and, while the rest of the household became gay and cheerful, Matilda stayed quietly in her own quarters, speaking to nobody unless she were spoken to, and working hard to keep up to what was now imposed on her. The gypsy-cook, as the others deridingly called her, had never seen the master of the house, when, going one day to draw water from the well, she accidentally beheld, crossing the courtyard, a young man of surprising beauty and elegance. His manly form and martial bearing were contradicted by the long fair locks flowing upon his shoulders, and the boyish sweetness of his smile. Matilda found herself gazing after him, until the jug nearly slipped from her hand. What

was it, that for the first time made her realize her degraded position, and sigh for the beauty she now kept under a cloud? While musing thus, she spilt the contents of the salt-cellar into the soup, bringing down on her a sharp rating from Frau Gertrude. From that day forth, Matilda's peace of mind had vanished utterly. Whenever she heard the sound of spurs in the court-yard, she ran to the window, and, for some reason, she was always fetching water from the well.

"Oh, I know the reason," interposed Regi, beamingly; "Matilda was badly mashed."

"You speak in an unknown tongue," said the châtelaine, coldly. "Pardon me if I suggest that I don't like interruption."

"Thomas says that, when the laundress goes to the back door to see the coachman," said the little boy, abashed.

Matters continued thus, during the chief part of a very gay season. Count Conrad went from tilt to tournament, from feast to ball. Owing to successful commerce with wealthy Venice, Augsburg had now increased in luxury and splendor. Matilda, alone in her smoky kitchen, wept over the memory of past rank and fortune, although from infancy her lot had been a hard one. As the child of the outlawed Owlfinger, she had no hope of ever being received among her equals in birth and position. It was as well for her to remain a lowly cook-maid, sighing out her heart for love of the handsomest cavalier of the country, who had not so much as deigned to look at her in passing;

although, in her innocence, Matilda had no suspicion of the true nature of her feelings for her master, until circumstances brought about their meeting.

In compliment to the Emperor Frederic, upon the birth of his son, Prince Maximilian, the citizens of Augsburg had, about this time, made ready a sumptuous festival, designed to continue during three days. Every day was to see a tournament, every evening a banquet and a ball. In these rejoicings, Conrad was everywhere the first object of attention, riding, dancing, singing better than any other knight present.

On the evening of the first banquet, Matilda felt as if she could not endure the grimy solitude of her kitchen. Making a desperate effort, she resolved to test the power of her boxwood ball. When the kitchen was nicely swept, she retired to her own little garret at the top of the house ; and, after a bath which removed every trace of her tawny complexion, revealing the lilies and roses of her natural skin more brilliant than before, she took the scent-ball in her hand, wishing for a new gown as elegant as fancy could devise. On unscrewing the top, there glided from within a mass of shimmering stuff, expanding and gushing like a stream of water into her lap. This, upon examination, proved to be a robe of pale green gauze, embroidered with silver coral, and looped with rosy shells. After it, came a garland of shells and seaweed for the hair, with a necklace and bracelets of oriental pearls. Next, fan, shoes, gloves and other necessary articles disclosed themselves ; and Matilda, giving a little scream of girlish rapture, hastened to try the effect of her new possessions. When she was fully dressed, her tiny looking-glass revealed a beauty who might have sat beside the emperor. In feverish

"She stole down the long flight of quiet stairs to the streets."

haste, she stole down the long flight of quiet stairs to the streets, while rolling in her hand the boxwood ball and whispering the spell :

> "Light before me, shade behind,
> So may I my true love find."

Not a sound was heard, except the deep breathing of slumbering folk, the snore of the porter at the door, and the disturbed movements of a watch-dog, all of whom owned the Nixie's power, and slept profoundly, while Matilda passed out into the street. Unseen by passers-by, and by the lacqueys at the entrance of the banquet-hall, she drew near the scene of festivity, stepping into the ball-room with the air of one of the Graces. At once, a loud murmur of admiration ran through the company, which separated to give passage to the lovely damsel. Plumed heads were tossed into the air, silks rustled, diamonds flashed, in the effort to gain a peep at her. Foremost in the throng pressed the noble Count Conrad, who, in a suit of rose and silver, was himself as beautiful as a picture. Bending his knee, he asked the honor of Matilda's hand in the dance just forming. Matilda consented, and her airy lightness enchanted every one. Conrad, enamored at first sight, continued by her side during the remainder of her stay. He tried in every way to find out who she was ; but she eluded him, promising, however, that she would be present at the ball of the ensuing night. Soon, the rumor got abroad that this bewitching stranger was the child of one of Count Conrad's oldest allies, and many sought the honor of her acquaintance ; but at the close of the dance she had vanished, no one knew where. The truth was that Matilda, holding her magic ball, had glided down the palace stairway saying,

"Light before me, shade behind,
So may I deliverance find;"

by which means, she passed unseen back to her chamber, although the streets were filled with envoys, stationed there by the count to see where his fair partner should go. It was daybreak when, with trembling fingers, Matilda took off her finery, concealing it in her box, and resumed her mean disguise. Frau Gertrude, finding her cook stirring so early, gave her an ungracious compliment upon her active habits, when she looked in to see if Matilda were busy about the breakfast.

As for Count Conrad, returning home soon after, he threw himself upon his bed, overwhelmed with impatience for the time which should bring him face to face again with the lady of his admiration. Falling asleep at length, he arose at a late hour of the afternoon, and was disappointed to find that still several hours must elapse before the opening of the festivities. At the earliest moment when he could with propriety be present, Conrad appeared in the banquet-hall, keeping an eye upon the door.

It was Matilda's business to attend to the duties of her kitchen before she could possibly consider the attractions of the toilet; and it was only after scouring her pots, kettles and pans that she retired as before to the bath, emerging in fresher loveliness. Turning over her magic ball, she wished for a gown of rose pink, the count's favorite color. Out came a flowing tide of softest pink satin covered with lace like frost-work. A chaplet of pink roses, and a necklace of pink topaz completed the outfit, which Matilda put on with delight, practising the step of the dance in her garret-room before setting out. By the help of her talisman,

she reached the ball as before ; there Count Conrad received her, leaning upon whose arm, she made the circuit of the ball-room followed by all eyes. The evening passed gayly, but when she bade him farewell as before, Count Conrad, who was now desperately in love, led Matilda into a side room and implored her to tell him her real name and estate, as he was desirous of asking her in marriage of her parents.

"Alas! count," said Matilda, in a melancholy voice, "if I answered you, it would certainly separate us forever. Only one thing can I tell you : I am an orphan, without friends."

"No matter who and what you are, then," answered Conrad; "I am ready to marry you at once, even if you are the meanest kitchen-maid in my employment. In proof of what I say, take this ring belonging to my ancestors, and when you are ready to accept my love, restore it to me. In the meantime, honor me by appearing at my house at an entertainment I am designing to give in your honor on Tuesday next."

He pressed the ring upon her finger, when Matilda, afraid to trust herself longer, broke away from him, and, thanks to the magic ball, disappeared at once. Remembering that Count Conrad had belonged to the party of those noblemen who had denounced her father as an outlaw and a thief, she realized the folly of what she had done. Going back to her lonely room, she cried all night, wondering what course her duty required her to take. Next day, she asked Frau Gertrude to allow her to give up her situation in the kitchen.

"Give up, now!" shrieked Gertrude. "Just when it is whispered that my master is to be married to a beautiful heiress with whom he has danced two

evenings at the ball. The town is ringing with it. Certain it is our orders are to prepare for a splendid party at which he expects her presence, on Tuesday next; and I'd like to know who's to share the work with me, if you take yourself off, ungrateful creature?"

So Matilda remained to carry out the arrangements for her own party. Confectioners' men and pastry cooks in their white caps took possession of the premises; game and fowls, venison and fish, sweets and rare wines, were procured in abundance. Nothing was too grand for this feast, according to the master's orders.

On the appointed night, when the mansion was ablaze with lights, and music was playing, Count Conrad, in his richest attire, stood receiving his guests. All the nobility were present, and, from time to time, all eyes turned toward the door, since report said this fête was given in honor of a guest, who would that night be presented to his friends as the betrothed of Conrad. But time passed, and there was no appearance of the lovely stranger. The young count's bright face was visibly overclouded. His gayety forsook him, and he withdrew from the dance in gloomy silence. When supper was announced, the host could not be found; and a little while later the ball broke up, amid murmurs of surprise and discontent from the retiring guests. So violent was the count's disappointment at Matilda's failure to accept his invitation, that he took to his bed with a fever, which before morning made him seriously ill. In the course of twenty-four hours, several of the best doctors of the place were consulting over him, unable to decide as to the cause of his malady, which grew rapidly more alarming. At this crisis Matilda, who, in her lowly position, hearing what was passing in

the quarters of her master, suffered from acute anxiety, begged Frau Gertrude to allow her to make a soup, of which the recipe had been bequeathed her by her mother.

"Three spoonfuls of this broth will assuredly restore your master to health," she said, "since it is compounded of simples of a nature known only in our family. Try it, I pray you, and you will see an immediate good result."

The old housekeeper, who had come to have some confidence in her subordinate, decided to make the trial, and shortly afterward, entering the count's room with a covered bowl from which rose a delicious odor, urged him to taste a few spoonfuls of its contents.

Poor Conrad was too ill to remonstrate. Rather than be talked to death outright, he submitted to her treatment. Uncovering the bowl, he beheld at the bottom of the clear soup his own ring. In an instant, he sat up in bed, with a new fire in his eye, emptying the bowl before he would part with it, and then contriving to abstract the ring without notice from Frau Gertrude.

"Who made this good soup, that thus restores me to life and hope?" he inquired, anxiously.

"Your own cook, your highness," said Gertrude; "a poor gypsy girl I picked up from the street some months ago, who has turned out much better than I could have hoped."

"Bring her here at once, that I may thank her," said the knight.

"That I must refuse you," answered the old woman, "since the very sight of her ugly face would make you ill again. She's a humpback, browner than a coffee berry, and in every way repulsive."

"Do as I bid you!" shouted the knight; and Frau Gertrude, in alarm, ran to the kitchen with his order, while he hastily arose from his couch, and prepared to receive his visitor in the adjoining room.

"Here, take the veil I wear to mass, and cover yourself with it, head and heels," she said to Matilda. "Keep yourself in the shade near the doorway, and perhaps he may not notice you."

"Let me have time only to make myself a little more tidy," urged the girl; and, running swiftly to her little room, she removed the stains as before, putting on the rose-colored satin the count had so much admired, and covering all with Frau Gertrude's veil. Thus concealed, she entered the reception room with a faltering step.

"Tell me at once, my good girl, how you came by the ring you served in my bowl of soup?" he asked, in the tone of one accustomed to be obeyed.

"Noble knight," came the answer, in a modest voice, "it was from your own hands that I received it, on the evening we danced together. Now that you know my humble station, judge if I should have done right to accept your offers. I have come to bid you farewell, and to thank you for the shelter of your home."

"I care not whether you be kitchen-maid or countess," cried the knight, "your voice arouses all my love for you."

"Then there is another reason," said she, sighing deeply. "Know, count, that I am the daughter of the outlaw Owlfinger."

Matilda then told her story in full, and, when she had finished speaking, threw back her veil, revealing her pale but lovely face, and extended her hand to take leave.

Taking her hand in his, Count Conrad placed on it

the family ring, vowing that she and none but she should be his bride.

"It was my father, not I, who cherished such hatred against the ill-fated Owlfinger, and that hatred has descended to his widow, who fortunately lives at a great distance from us, else I should fear for you her displeasure, should she find out your origin."

Summoning Frau Gertrude, who stood without, the count then commended to her care his bride to be, giving orders for the celebration of the wedding that self-same day. When Gertrude saw, instead of her deformed kitchen-maid, a beautiful lady in trailing lace and satin emerge from the room, the old woman tumbled backward in astonishment, fracturing her leg, and having to walk from that day forth with a crutch—which did not improve her temper, be it said.

The wedding took place, and the only drawback to Matilda's happiness was the angry opposition of Conrad's mother, who, arriving, coaxed and threatened him vigorously, in the effort to make him renounce the project of marriage with Owlfinger's daughter. Finding that it did no good, the dowager went off in a rage to her distant castle, declaring she would find means to punish the audacious bride and groom, before many years should be allowed them to defy her.

A year had passed, when Conrad announced to his wife that he had built a summer residence on an estate owned by him, in a neighborhood possibly familiar to her. Matilda guessed this to be the vicinity of her old home, and she was not disappointed, on alighting from the chariot at the end of a long drive, to find herself in a beautiful house, overlooking the site of the burned castle, and adjoining the wood of the Nix-lady's grotto. As soon as she could get off unobserved, she flew to

the fountain, whose clear waters again filled the basin, dropping a pebble into it with an eager hand. Alas! no sign of her cherished godmother! Matilda waited for a while, then cast into the water her box-wood ball. Still no response, and, shedding tears of disappointment at the failure of her talisman, she retraced her steps homeward. A short time after this, Matilda was blessed with a boy more beautiful than a little Cupid, and the picture of health and strength, who was consigned to the charge of a nurse sent by Conrad's mother, and received by the young couple as a token that her wrath was passing away. For some days, joy reigned supreme in the home of Conrad and Matilda. The young mother, who adored her child, and who could not be satisfied to have him out of her sight for a moment, insisted he should be allowed to sleep in a gilded cradle by her side. One night, when the house was buried in profound slumber, the mother, awaking, stretched out her hand to feel for the child, who was not there. Calling to the nurse, she asked anxiously if she had taken it to her room, as sometimes happened.

"Not I, madam," said the nurse, running quickly. "Can it be that the blessed babe has rolled upon the floor?"

They searched everywhere, but found no trace of the infant, and the nurse, going into violent hysterics, declared it could be none but the grand griffin, a bogie believed in throughout the countryside, who had carried off their treasure. Poor Conrad and Matilda spent months in trying to find a clew to the mystery, which remained inscrutable. For a year they mourned their babe, and at the end of that time, a second beautiful son was sent to cheer their solitude. The third night after the arrival of the baby, Matilda, awaking, called

again to the nurse, and behold, the child was gone as before, and this in spite of the fact that the anxious mother had chained him to her side with a golden chain of which the links were wrenched apart. Poor Matilda fainted away, and the count, in a transport of indignation, drew his sword upon the nurse.

"Wretched woman," he cried in a voice of thunder, "Did I not order you to watch while others slept, and never to let the child and his mother repose unprotected by your presence? If it be the grand griffin who has again despoiled us, you could have frightened him away by your cries. It was your fault that we are again childless, and your life shall pay the forfeit."

"O mercy, mercy, my lord count," cried the woman upon her knees. "Never had I thought to reveal to you all I know about this dark tragedy. But to save my life, I will speak. Only take me into a private room, where no mortal ear may overhear the tale."

Conrad granted her request, and when they were alone the woman informed him that his wife, his beloved Matilda, was a sorceress, who had sacrificed her children to the grand griffin, in order to extort from him the secret of imperishable beauty.

"Long before you met her," added the nurse, "it was well known that Owlfinger's daughter was in league with spirits of evil. From her cradle she has held a charm that will summon them at will. Take my advice, count, and give her up to be dealt with by the hand of justice, before greater wrong be done to you."

Conrad turned pale as death, and then, as the memory of what Matilda had told him about her Nix godmother returned to him, he staggered out of the room, to shut himself in his own apartments, where for some days he brooded in wretched silence. Do what he

could, it was not possible to shake off the belief in Matilda's guilt; and, after a time, he decided to take leave of his unfortunate wife, surrendering her to the authorities to be dealt with as a sorceress—for in those days the dread of witchcraft sundered the closest ties of family affection.

No sooner had Count Conrad left the castle, than the officers of justice came to arrest Matilda. Cast into a dungeon, she was taken out only to be tried, and condemned to a painful death. No sympathy was felt for her, since all believed the nurse's story. Conducted into a room made of iron, she experienced a stifling heat, which at every moment grew more intense. Falling upon a couch, she uttered a plaintive cry, repeating over and over again, "Conrad, I die innocent," when out of her dress rolled the forgotten magic ball, whose powers she had believed to be exhausted.

"Help me, godmother, I implore you!" she exclaimed despairingly.

The ball, striking the floor, burst apart, and from it arose a cloud of cooling vapor that in an instant filled the room. Instead of the previous burning heat, an atmosphere like that of the forest grotto was felt. The cloud of mist, parting, disclosed a familiar form robed and veiled in wavering robes of white, bedewed with water-drops. The Nix-lady, as beautiful as ever, stood before her godchild, and oh, joy! in her arms she held two lovely boys, one crowing and smiling, the other a sleeping infant.

"My children!" cried Matilda, in accents of purest joy.

"Yes, Matilda, I have come to restore to you these living pledges of your innocence. Lucky for you that you did not exhaust the fourth wish of your scent ball, for,

through its power, I am now able to relieve you. Listen while I tell you who is the real author of your woes, your secret, unsparing enemy. It is the mother of your husband, who, in her desire to bring about your downfall, devised this plot. The lying nurse was, by her, instructed to swear against you. On each occasion when the baby disappeared, it was stolen from your side by that wretch, who, running to the fountain, cast the little innocent into the water, meaning to drown it. These arms received my dear Matilda's children, and cared for them as for my own. Take your darlings, and henceforth be happy. Though the power of the scent ball passes away hereby, you will have no more occasion to wish for my aid, since love, peace and all earthly blessings shall henceforth be yours. And now, my love, farewell. Having accomplished all I can do for you, I may visit you no more."

Leaning over, the Nix-lady kissed her goddaughter upon the forehead, gave her blessing to the infants, and vanished as she had come. At this moment was heard without the galloping of a horse. The rider was Conrad, who, unable to bear the torture of his thoughts about Matilda, had returned to stop the execution of her sentence at any risk.

"Is she yet alive?" he asked, rushing up to the prison door, with trembling footsteps.

"A miracle has been worked, my lord count!" said the executioners. "In spite of the great fire we have kept up, the walls of the cell have become cold, and instead of cries from within, we have heard the murmur of sweet voices, and the sound of a mother talking to her babes. Indeed, my lord, we dare not go in to see."

With frantic haste, Conrad unbarred the doors of the

cell, and saw his wife, his own Matilda, smiling and unhurt, holding her children in her arms!

When he had heard her story, Count Conrad could hardly contain his rage. Ordering the nurse to be brought before him, he read guilt in her terror-stricken face, and the wretched creature, falling on her knees, confessed the plot. She was at once condemned to suffer the same death that had awaited the Countess; but at Matilda's request the sentence was changed to imprisonment for life in a distant dungeon.

To the end of their days, Conrad and his Countess were prosperous and happy. Their boys grew up to be famous knights, the pride of their country, and the glory of their noble house.

"That was a funny kind of an oven; and I don't think Conrad was nice, at all, for ever believing the nurse, and then deserting his wife," was Regi's sole remark during some moments. Presently he gave a loud portentous yawn, remarking:

"I wish they'd give me something besides those everlasting old baked apples for my tea."

The aristocratic châtelaine, feeling rather mortified, made no reply; not even when, by-and-by, he requested to know what became of Conrad's wicked mother.

THE QUILL PEN'S STORIES.

"My home was in Provence, in France," began, without prelude, a quill pen of unpretending aspect. "As candor and open speaking are the order of the day, I may state that I belonged to the stock and fixtures of a village shop in a place that shall be nameless. One day, seized by a poet in a moment of inspiration, I composed part of an epic that afterward became famous. The poet went back to live in his cottage home, and I, with the ink left to dry upon me, was thrown aside—the fate of genius! Before long, however, some Americans, who, I will do them the justice to say, were very decent kind of people, came travelling our way. They were full of admiration for the person I spoke of (though I leave it to you to decide whether it was he, or I, who did the work!); and they rummaged in every corner of the village, to secure some memento of him. My owner parted with me for a five franc piece, and I went into the writing-case of an enthusiastic lady, who afterward sent me as a present to your papa, her brother in America. Well, it is good to travel and see the world, I suppose, but I often lie here listening to your winter storms, and wish myself back again in my old home, where the mistral sweeps through the pines upon the hill tops, making the windmills creak mournfully, and the red tiles of the old roofs scatter like autumn leaves."

"What is the mistral?" asked Regi.

"It is a northwest wind peculiar to our region, that in winter blows over the western basin of the Mediterranean Sea; a wind so dry and fierce and blustering, as to be the dread of natives and visitors alike. But ah! one forgives much for the sake of the land of poetry and old romance! Once ours was the garden-spot of France, where the rose grew, and the olive, and the vine; where nuts dropped from the trees, and delicious fruits might be gathered by the hand of every passer-by—a land of fertile plains, watered by winding rivers, and guarded by frowning mountains—the adopted home of Petrarch, the birthplace of green-robed Laura with her crown of violets."

"Hello!" said Regi, as if he were hailing an omnibus. "Aren't you getting along a little fast for me? I don't think I know anything about those people you spoke of last."

"He, Petrarch, was a brother poet," the pen said, modestly, "although he preceded me by several centuries. Laura was the lady of his love, in whose honor he wrote upward of a hundred sonnets."

"What are sonnets?" the boy persisted.

"Oh! dear, if I'm to stop to explain everything. A sonnet is a short poem of fourteen lines, the rhymes arranged——"

"Well, you may skip that," said Regi.

"I thought so! As I was going on to say, in Provence the country folk speak a sort of French you would think very droll. But it was once the language of kings and queens; and the old troubadours made lovely songs in it. The poet who claimed my epic, by the way, writes verses in Provençal, and people make a great deal of unnecessary fuss over them, I think. The best way to

get at Provençal ballads and stories is to visit the red-roofed farm-houses, at evening when the work is done, when autumn has sprinkled the earth with a mantle of hoar-frost. Then the peasants like to gather around the fireside and chat, while the mulled wine is passed from hand to hand—or they attend the village festivals, when bonfires and colored lanterns gleam in the public square and a giddy circle of dancers forms in answer to the call of tambourines. And from the shepherds, too, who at the first hint of summer weather, drive their cattle up into the high hill pastures, themselves to lie at ease upon the rich grass, wrapped in their mantles of crimson serge, exchanging gossip by the light of the stars, you may gain a store of information. It was from one of these honest cowherds (he dropped in at my master's shop, to secure our services to write out some rhymes made in honor of a pretty black-eyed daughter of the mill), that I chanced to hear about the sad fortunes of Monsieur Seguin's goat, or to speak more properly, 'La cabro de mousso Seguin.'"

"Please don't speak more properly then, for I shouldn't understand you, and I'm getting interested," said the little boy.

"To be incomprehensible is a poet's privilege," remarked the pen, proudly. "This little story is a favorite in our neighborhood."

Monsieur Seguin had bad luck with his goats. At least six of them, in turn, had disappeared, after the same fashion. Morning after morning he would awake to find another halter snapped, another goat off to the mountain top, to be gobbled by the wolf. Nothing could restrain these naughty creatures from running

away to meet their untimely fate. Give them liberty or death, said they, and the poor master was in despair.

"It's all up with me," said he, gloomily. "I used to have a knack of attaching them to me. But now I might as well retire from the goat-keeping business altogether."

However, he took heart, and the next market day bought another—a little beauty named Blanquette—quite young and teachable, who, he thought, might be influenced by love. I imagine you never saw such a handsome goat as she was. She had long, snowy, silken hair, with striped horns, hoofs polished till they shone like jet, a pretty little beard, and eyes as soft as velvet. Then Blanquette was so docile, so gentle in all her ways. She would stand perfectly still to be milked, and no one ever caught her putting her foot into the pail!

Behind Monsieur Seguin's house, was a little paddock hedged in with honeysuckle in full bloom. In this pleasant spot, Blanquette was tethered, upon the smooth grass, near a stream of running water. She had a cord long enough to enable her to roam at will over the enclosure, and from time to time kind Monsieur Seguin came to see if all went well. For a while Blanquette thought herself the happiest little goat in the world. There was nothing she could ask for more, as she strayed about, cropping the sweet grass, or drinking the cool water. Naturally enough, Monsieur Seguin was delighted. "At last," he said, "at last, I have secured one who will be contented!"

One day, however, Blanquette found herself gazing over the hedge, at the distant mountains.

"How nice it must be to live up yonder!" she thought. "How delightful to gambol about in the

"'My good Monsieur Seguin, I am tired to death of living with you,' she said."

heather, without this hateful cord to scratch one's neck, or to trip one up at unexpected moments! A paddock is meant for an ox or an ass to graze in. A goat now, especially one as young and nimble as myself, should roam at large."

From that hour the grass in her paddock appeared to her dry and tasteless. She grew dissatisfied and thin, ceasing to give rich milk, and fell into a trick of straining at her cord, turning her head in the direction of the mountain, with distended nostrils and mournful eyes, while uttering a pitiful "Me-e-e-e," that resounded far and near. Good Monsieur Seguin saw that something ailed her, but, not knowing the cause, was at his wit's end to make her satisfied. One morning, when he had finished milking, he was surprised to have his goat turn around, and address him in the patois of the country.

"My good Monsieur Seguin, I am tired to death of living with you," she said; "if you will only allow me to make an excursion to the mountain."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the stupefied master, dropping his pail of milk, and spilling every drop. When he had in some degree recovered from his surprise, he sat down in the grass, and addressed her coaxingly.

"Blanquette, my dear pretty little Blanquette, you want to run away from *me?*"

"Yes, Monsieur Seguin," replied Blanquette.

"Haven't you grass enough, Blanquette?"

"Yes, Monsieur Seguin," replied Blanquette.

"Is your cord too short—or too long?"

"No, Monsieur Seguin."

"Then, if you've nothing to complain of, I declare I don't know what you do want."

"I want to go up to the mountain, Monsieur Seguin."

"But, you little goose, don't you know there's a big, fierce wolf, up there? What would you do, if he came along, forsooth?"

"I'd butt him, Monsieur Seguin," meekly replied Blanquette.

"The wolf would laugh at your horns. He has digested many a bigger goat than you are. Have you never heard of my Renaude, the great, fierce, strong mother-goat, who strayed away last year; how she fought with the wolf all night, and was eaten by him in the morning?"

"Renaude! you don't say so, Monsieur Seguin? That was really a pity! But, if you please, I'd like to go to the mountain all the same, Monsieur Seguin."

"Heaven send me patience!" cried Monsieur Seguin, "what has bewitched my goats? Well, if there's no persuading you, Blanquette, I'll resort to stronger measures. I'll save you, despite yourself, you wilful creature. You shall be locked up in the dark stable, and there you shall remain."

And with this he led her, bleating piteously, into a pitch-black stable, where, turned loose in an empty stall, she was locked in, and left to her own devices.

Unfortunately for Monsieur Seguin, he had forgotten an open window, hidden behind a pile of loose hay. Blanquette, springing lightly up upon the hay, leaped to the ground outside, and was off in the twinkling of an eye!

When the pretty white goat reached the mountain-top, all nature smiled on her. Never had the old fir-trees seen anything so dainty. They received her like a little queen. The chestnuts bowed down to caress her with the tips of their branches. The furze opened

its golden blossoms upon her path, smelling as sweet as it possibly could. It was a perfect festival!

And now, was there ever a goat so happy? No more cord, no stake, no hedge; nothing to prevent her gambolling and munching where she pleased. What grass grew on the mountain side! It was up to one's very horns. And what a flavor it had, so full of fine, succulent plants she had never seen before—quite another thing from the short turf of the paddock. As to flowers, one couldn't number them—from great bluebells, and purple fox-gloves filled with dew, down to a maze of tiny wild-flowers, overflowing with intoxicating juices!

Gay little Blanquette, half-tipsy with delight, rolled over on her back in a bed of blossoms, kicking up her heels, and then slid down the slope, carrying with her a mass of dead leaves and chestnut-burs. Next, she regained her four feet and looked about her. Hurrah! off she goes, head down, over hill and knoll, now up on a peak, now down a ravine, here, there, everywhere, in a merry race. You would have said there were twenty goats, instead of one belonging to poor Monsieur Seguin, turned loose upon the mountain-side! With a bound, she sprang over the bed of a rushing torrent, to emerge, dripping wet with spray of a cascade, and lie, to dry herself, at full length on a flat rock in the sun. Once, coming out upon the verge of a cliff, munching a flower of the trefoil as she ran, Blanquette espied, far away in the valley beneath, the familiar cottage of Monsieur Seguin, with her well-remembered paddock in the rear.

"How very little it is," she said, laughing merrily. "How could it ever have contained me?"

At the height on which she stood, the silly creature thought herself quite as big as the whole round world!

Well, the hours wore on delightfully. In the course of her rambles, toward midday, the little runaway fell in with a troop of chamois who were lunching on a wild vine. Blanquette, in her beautiful snowy coat, made a decided sensation in their ranks. They received her politely, all insisting on making way for her to reach the best place at the vine, the younger ones showing her especial gallantry. 'Tis even whispered—though I give this for what it is worth—that Blanquette flirted considerably with a handsome young chamois dressed in glossy black. They roamed together in the woods for awhile, and if you want to know what they actually said to each other, I must refer you to some of those eavesdropping little brooks that are wont to run off under the long grass, prattling as they go.

All at once, the wind freshened. A violet haze seemed to settle on the mountain. Evening had come, and the stray goat stopped short in astonishment to gaze about her. A sea of mist filled the valley beneath, and of her late residence she could only catch a peep of the roof with a curling pillar of smoke. She heard the bells of a herd of cattle driven homeward; and, somehow or other, it made her feel sad. A gerfalcon returning to his leash swooped near her, brushing her with his wings. Then she heard, afar off in the mountains, a long mournful howl that made her tremble.

"Hoo! hoo! hoo!" was the sound.

Could this be the wolf, to whom not once before during that enchanting day had the foolish little goat given a thought? At the same moment, a horn sounded in the valley, and she knew it was her kind master who was making a final effort to recall the wanderer.

"Hoo! hoo!" was repeated on the mountain.

"Come back! come back!" echoed in the valley.

Blanquette had almost made up her mind to scamper home, when the idea of her cord, her stake, and her honeysuckle hedge rose before her. No, she could not return to bondage after freedom! It was really impossible!

Then the horn ceased to blow, and behind her she heard a stealthy rustling in the foliage. Turning abruptly around, she saw in the shadow two shining eyes, with two short ears cocked forward.

There was the huge motionless creature, his tail tucked under him, seated glaring at his prey. As he knew very well that he should get her finally, he was in no particular hurry. He was satisfied to pass his ugly red tongue over his chops, and occasionally to clash his teeth, while laughing at the idea that he had in his power the last of Monsieur Seguin's goats.

Blanquette gave herself up for lost, but, recalling the story about old Renaude, the stout mother-goat who had fought her enemy all night, she determined upon a brave resistance. So, taking a defiant attitude, head down, horns well forward, she prepared for the attack. Hurrah! brave little Blanquette! She made a splendid fight, I'll promise you! More than ten times she forced the wolf to hold off until he recovered his breath. And while he was panting before her, she would turn calmly aside to browse upon a juicy tuft of grass, returning to the combat with her mouth full. It lasted all night. From time to time, the poor little creature looked up at the stars twinkling in the clear sky, saying to herself, "I have no chance in the end; but ah! if I can only keep it up all night, that they may say of me what they said of Mère Renaude."

One after another the twinkling stars went out. A pallid light came into the horizon. Blanquette fought

more fiercely than before, still keeping the wolf at bay. Then a cock crowed in a farm-yard in the valley. "Morning has come at last!" said the little goat, wearily, as she fell over on her bleeding side. And then, the wolf——

"Don't say he gobbled her!" cried Regi, imploringly. "I think she was much too good for that. Poor little Blanquette! I wish she had been my goat. I should have led her up on the mountain myself. Please, please, don't let her be gobbled."

"When you visit Provence, you may find out what really occurred," answered the pen. "Look up some shepherd or mill-hand in the Rhone valley, and ask him about Monsieur Seguin's goat."

"I mean to make an ending for myself," said Regi, who had a thorough love for animals, and could not bear to see one suffer. "Just when the wolf fell upon Blanquette to devour her, a horn was heard, and up came running good Monsieur Seguin, who had been out hunting for his goat all night. He got there just in time to shoot the wolf; and then he took Blanquette home to her own little paddock, where she lived, repentant and all that, for many years to come."

"Perhaps you will change places with us, and tell *us* stories," said the pen. "No? Then I may give you another legend of Provence, about a sea-fairy called the Lutin."

On the border of the blue Mediterranean, where the Rhone mouths open to empty their tribute into the gulf, lived old Margaret with her seven grandsons.

"Stay by the fireside, my lads," urged the old woman, one evening. "Hear the mistral, how it blows! The very roof is shaking above our heads; and there is another reason, too. Don't you know that this is the night when the fairies meet for conference, and the Lutins, who do their bidding, are abroad in a thousand different shapes, ready to play tricks on the hapless traveller?"

"Bah! who cares for the Lutins, Bonnemaman," said her eldest grandson, in a mocking voice. "What! I stay at home, when a pretty maid is expecting me. Why, the daughter of Jacques the rope-maker would hardly close her big blue eyes all night, were I not to make my visit at her father's hearth-side before the moon is down."

"And I must fish for crabs and urchins," said the second youth. "I am not a bit afraid of fairies or Lutins either, Bonnemaman."

Thus one by one made his excuses, and was off. Only Richard the youngest lingered for awhile at his grandmother's knee, to hear a story she had promised to narrate to him. But, peeping through the chinks of the door, he saw the bright moon shining, heard the beat of waves upon the shore, and smelt the odor of thyme and primroses. Unable to resist their call, he too ran off and joined the rest, who were running about between the uplands and the beach.

"What could Bonnemaman have meant?" the children asked each other. "The mistral has ceased wailing, and now never was finer weather, or brighter sky. See how the moon sails in majesty behind the transparent clouds. It must be certain that the old grow cowardly. Who fears the Lutins? Not we!" and they laughed defiantly.

Just then the children saw, trotting about in the sweet-scented grass near by, a pretty little black pony, who neighed when he saw they noticed him.

"That must be one of old Valentine's horses, that has run away from the stable," cried they. "Let us catch him, and have a ride."

To their surprise, the pony allowed himself to be taken by the forelock without remonstrance, while the oldest of the brothers climbed upon his back. Next another and another followed suit. Last of all, little Richard was lifted up, laughing and clinging to his brother's shoulders.

"Now, we shall ride you to the fountain to get a drink," said the brothers, urging their steed in the direction of the watering-place.

The little black horse whinnied as if he understood, obediently trotting off. It seemed as if all the children in the neighborhood had deserted their homes that moonshiny night! One after another of their young friends ran after the riders on the little black horse, begging that they too might be taken up. Each time the little horse stood still patiently, until the new-comer had mounted; and, strangely enough, his back stretched until it held at least thirty children, while he only trotted more gayly under the burden.

The children were not satisfied with a gentle trot. They struck their heels against the sides of the little black horse. "Gallop," they cried. "Gallop, my good steed, for you have never had such riders."

And now the wind resumed its violence. A long moaning blast swept over land and sea. The waves beat upon the shore, and the little black horse, instead of carrying his riders to the fountain, turned and galloped straight toward the water.

Little Richard thought of his scattered thyme and primroses and wanted to jump off. His oldest brother thought of the blue eyes of the rope-maker's daughter and decided to go back. The others thought of many a cheerful sport. All were ready to give up this frolic with the little black horse, but their steed only went faster, till the waves wet his fore-feet.

When the water came up to the waists of our poor children, they began to reproach themselves bitterly for their imprudence.

"The little black horse is a Lutin!" they screamed, "Oh! if we had only listened to Bonnemaman's advice!"

These were the last words the unhappy children spoke, for immediately the green arch of a mighty wave rose before them, and, neighing merrily, as if his oats were awaiting him, the little black horse plunged into it.

Next day, poor old Margaret walked the shore, anxiously searching for tokens of her brood. Many of the neighbors joined her, for out of almost every cottage at least one had been taken. Not a trace of the lost children came to sight. Presently, a little black horse ran before them capering and curvetting, and dashed into the sea.

"It is a Lutin!" said the distracted parents, crossing themselves devoutly. But the children never came home again.

"I shall take care not to ride my pony near the waves when we go to the sea next summer," Regi said. "He is black, too; but I think he is more afraid of the breakers than I am. What do you suppose the Lutin

did with those children when he got them down there?"

"Oh! I don't know. Set them to polishing the inside of shells, mayhap; or perhaps they pounded anchovy paste for toast. That's a grand coast for anchovies. If you are not tired of Provençal legends, there's a pretty one about Brincan, who was loved by a green-haired Fairy."

Brincan was a sailor's son, and his home was near the sea. To aid in the support of his mother during the absence of her husband, he caught fish and sold them at a good price, since peasants' wives and landladies were always willing to purchase from the handsomest lad around Marseilles. Brincan's cheek was as rosy as a lady-apple, his locks were as yellow as gold, and his limbs were like polished ivory. When he swam with his young companions, he might have been mistaken for one of the beauteous sea-nymphs who play on their harps to lure landsmen to destruction. No wonder Brincan's coming made the blood quicken in the pulse of many a pretty maiden picking grapes upon the hill-sides, or roaming beneath the olive-groves at evening. It was even told of him, that sometimes, when diving in the water, he heard sweet melodies from distant harp-strings, accompanied by silver voices urging him to renounce his home above, and dwell in the sea-king's kingdom.

One of Brincan's favorite pastimes was, at evening, when sea-breezes cooled the burning atmosphere, and the little waves broke gently one upon the other, to seat himself in a light boat and row far from the town, to where, looking back, he could see Marseilles ap-

"At the portal, a charming fairy stood waving white arms to beckon him within."

parently floating in a cloud of white vapor lighted by fiery gleams. Then he would bend over, gazing into the depths of the water, watching by star-light the myriad fishes that played below, amid forests of waving sea-weed. One midsummer evening, when Brincan was thus studying the movements of a star-fish, he felt himself drawn downward by some unseen power. Around him the water formed a funnel, as he was sucked into the abyss, leaving his boat above. Believing that he had fallen overboard, Brincan lamented his sad lot, calling aloud a farewell to the beautiful earth, the dear parents, the loved companions, and the fair maidens he was forever leaving. Strangely enough, he could breathe in comfort, and as yet suffered no inconvenience from the water. Down, down he glided, seeing all the wonders of the deep, passing unharmed among the sea-monsters who surveyed him quietly, hearing afar off sweet music that was never lent to mortal ear. At length he arrived at the gates of a beautiful palace, formed of rainbow-tinted mother-of-pearl and scarlet coral, the walls encrusted with pearl and the floors made of odoriferous amber. At the portal, a charming fairy stood waving white arms to beckon him within.

Brincan looked at her in wonderment. She had eyes more luminous than the water in the wake of a ship, teeth like rows of her own pearls, a belt of sea-rushes, and long green hair that floated below her waist. Who could believe that such a soft little white hand had power to drag stout ships to the bottom of the sea, or that such a musical voice could ordain tempests, and control the raging waterspout? Brincan, without a word, fell on his knees before her; but, whispering "I love you, Brincan," she clasped him in her arms.

At once he sank into a happy trance wherein he forgot earth and all it contained. Conducted within the palace, the sea-queen told him she would make him her husband. The marriage took place, and Brincan sat upon the throne beside his lovely wife, while all the monsters of the deep, following long trains of mer-men and mer-women, arrived to do him homage. But Brincan's stay in the mother-of-pearl palace was short, for on the following day, his bride told him he must return to earth.

"Say nothing to your mother of what has passed here, or to any one else. When you reach your boat again you will find it filled with fishes which will sufficiently account for your absence of a night. At least twice a week you must row out to the same point, whence you shall be conducted in the same manner to my presence. Remember you have taken a wife, and let no other maiden charm you from me, for the day of your infidelity will assuredly prove the day of your death."

Now came back to Brincan the remembrance of his former life, and with it a strange terror of the tie he had formed below. Bidding his sea-wife adieu, he felt himself carried upward through the translucent waves, till, without being in the least wet, he reached his familiar bark, which was filled with silvery fishes of such uncommon size and quality as to fetch a high price in the market, whither he carried them before returning home. Brincan was surprised to see his friends and neighbors staring at him curiously, until, when he had reached his mother's cottage, she exclaimed that his hair had turned quite green. Do what he might, the greenish tinge remained.

From that day Brincan made repeated visits to his beautiful sea-queen, who loved him fondly, telling him

that whenever he ceased to love her in return, he should surely perish. In an unfortunate hour for him, he met, at a festival among the vines upon the hill-side, a village maiden with soft dark eyes, shining hair of a jet black hue, and laughing rosy lips. She smiled upon him, and the youth felt his heart go out to her, as it had never done to any one before. "What matters it?" he said, "the other will never know." So he gave his love to the earth-maiden, and for some weeks neglected to visit the sea-queen; and now a strange thing happened, his hair lost its tinge of green, regaining the golden hue. The earth-maiden returned his love, but when he wished to caress her and clasp her to his heart, invisible hands pushed him back, pinching and slapping him. He fell into a state of languor that could not be explained, and wise people whispered it about that poor Brincan had fallen beneath the spell of fairy displeasure.

At length Brincan determined to go and appeal to the sea-queen for release from his now hateful tie. Once more he sought his little boat, and rowed far from the port of Marseilles to the spot whence the fairy was accustomed to draw him to her home. Again he was engulfed in the emerald wave, sinking with frightful velocity; but, this time, hideous fishes menaced him, his ears and mouth were filled with brine, a noise like thunder sounded in his ears, and pale, bleeding, more dead than alive, he reached the portal of the palace of mother-of-pearl and coral.

At the entrance, her face full of wrath, her green hair glittering, the sea-queen stood, and Brincan saw that his doom was sealed. He had no mercy to hope for at her hands. Nothing could move the fairy—neither his youth, his beauty, nor the tears that fell from his eyes upon the amber floor!

"You have betrayed me. You shall die," were the only words she spoke, fixing her terrible eyes upon him. Then, making a sign with her forefinger, she uttered a mocking laugh as two frightful monsters threw themselves with open jaws upon their prey.

"I like Blanquette and the Lutin the best of yours," remarked the boy, patronizingly.

"Perhaps you would appreciate Brincan more, if you heard it sung in the ballad from which the story came."

"I don't mind the way you tell it, so much," was the reply. "But I think Brincan was a regular silly, to let himself get into such a scrape about nothing but a *girl!*" the last in a tone of immeasurable contempt.

"You may have cause to change your tune some day, my dear young friend," replied the pen; at which Regi looked puzzled, then scampered off with Bran bounding at his heels.

THE OAKEN SETTLE'S STORY.

"Ho! for merry England!" said, or rather chanted a jovial voice, that Regi thought he recalled, after a misty fashion. It came from a settle of curiously carved wood, black with age, and beaming with good fellowship—or with hand polish, it was hard to say which—that stood in a corner of the fire. The little boy was very fond of stroking the stags' heads and game represented on its back and arms, and of poking his finger into the grinning mouth of a grotesque mask with horns and pointed ears, that crowned the summit.

"Oh! I'm so glad it is you!" he cried. "Now I remember you perfectly. You said you had not forgotten what it was to be young, and you called me a funny name that made me laugh; 'Younker,' don't you know?"

"*I* know, but the mischief knows how you know," answered the settle. "You were safely tucked in bed, as we supposed, when the matter was discussed on Christmas night."

"I haven't the least idea," said Regi. "I have been wondering over it ever since. But one thing is certain, my stories have been splendid. I can't bear to think that Twelfth Night will soon be here, and that that will be the end of it."

"Don't mope till the time comes," said the cheery settle, "but tell me what sort of a tale you want me to

muster up. Have you had your fill of fairies and hob-goblins; or shall it be about knights and dragons?"

"About all of 'em!" cried Regi, with kindling eyes.

"Odds boddikens! but you are nothing backward at request!" replied the bench, relapsing into the old-fashioned forms of speech it had been his effort to abandon in order to adapt himself to the comprehension of his hearer. "Ahem! with every wish to make myself agreeable, you must be content with what I have picked up here and there in the way of legendary lore. Part of it came to me while I was yet a portion of the parent oak that stood like a giant in our ancestral forest, for you are not to suppose that when we trees lean together and rustle, we are not exchanging confidences. We tell over again what we have heard from the wayfarer who rests at noon in the tall fern at our feet, and many a laugh is passed along our lines at the expense of the lovers who carve their names upon our trunks, swearing the while their love will never change! Part of what I know was learned in my later dwelling-place, a dealer's shop in a quiet town in one of the more southern counties. This dealer was a worthy old body, who had the sole care of a little orphaned grandchild, Dorothy by name. Dorothy was blind; and, to entertain her, the old fellow would discourse by the hour, she sitting in her favorite haunt, a moth-eaten sedan-chair, while he worked up his 'restorations' at her elbow. Above all things Dorothy loved fairy-lore. She would ask question after question; and, to inform himself, the dealer bought up old bound volumes of penny chap-books, and other ancient stories, printed with the long *ſ* upon a saffron page, afterward reciting them till the dull shop and warerooms seemed alive with elfin figures."

"I like Dorothy in the sedan-chair," Regi interrupted.

"Most people liked her, for she was a quiet, patient little thing, with long golden locks, and tiny fingers deft at knitting-work. Dear me! Dorothy must be an old woman now, or else she sleeps under the daisies in the village graveyard. If there are any fairies left in England still, I'll warrant they keep the wild flowers blooming over Dorothy. Of all that was told her by those books, Dorothy loved best to hear what Shakespeare said of 'fairies, black, green, gray, and white.' She was always imagining how Queen Mab must look,

> "In shape no bigger than an agate stone
> On the forefinger of an alderman,
> Drawn with a team of little atomies
> Athwart men's noses as they lie asleep."

"Ha! ha! ha!" shouted Regi, "how she must have tickled!"

> "Her wagon-spokes made of long spinners' legs;
> The cover, of the wings of grasshoppers;
> Her traces, of the smallest spider's web;
> Her collars, of the moonshine's watery beams:
> Her whip of cricket's bone; the lash, of film:
> Her wagoner, a small, gray-coated gnat,
> Not half so big as a round little worm
> Prick'd from the lazy finger of a maid:
> Her chariot is an empty hazel-nut,
> Made by the joiner-squirrel, or old grub,
> Time out of mind the fairies' coachmakers."

"That is the *best!*" laughed Regi, slapping his knee, in an ecstacy. "I never knew before that the squirrel is the fairy carpenter."

> "And in this state she gallops night by night
> Through lovers' brains, and then they dream of love:
> On courtiers' knees, that dream on court'sies straight:

O'er lawyers' fingers, who straight dream on fees :
O'er ladies' lips, who straight on kisses dream :
Which oft the angry Mab with blisters plagues
Because their breaths with sweetmeats tainted are."

"So that's where the fever blisters come from," exclaimed the listener, with a comical face. "I'm certain Lynchy would believe in Mab, if she doesn't believe in any other fairy."

"Dorothy believed in all of them," resumed the settle. "She would often beg her father to read to her a passage in another one of Shakespeare's plays, where some jolly people are dressed up to represent fairies, and their leader is giving them directions what to do. They were to jump into Windsor chimneys, and, wherever they found the 'fires unraked' and the 'hearth unswept,' to 'pinch the maids as blue as bilberry.'

"A lovely fancy, turned over in her mind by Dorothy until she could almost see and smell the blossoms it embalmed, was that where the fairies are bidden to write the motto of the English order of the Garter, upon the field at nightfall.

' And 'Honi soit qui mal y pense' write,
In emerald tufts, flowers, purple, blue and white,
Like sapphire, pearl, and rich embroidery,
Buckled below fair knighthood's bending knee :
Fairies use flowers for their charactery.'

"Although this little blind girl had only to use her grandsire's eyes to look into a world of enchantment, such as the 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' by comparison with which all fairy chronicles seem tame, she had pets among the other ancient rhymesters. There was Lylie, who put upon the stage, in the year when the 'Midsummer Night's Dream' was printed, a fairy scene

of the daintiest description, wherein Penny, Cricket, and their tricksome mates, come on singing and dancing, and describe themselves as follows :

Penny. 'I do come about the copse,
Leaning on the flowers' tops ;
Then I get upon a fly—
She carries me about the sky,
And trip and go.'

Cricket. 'When a dew-drop falleth down,
And doth light upon my crown,
Then I shake my head and skip
And about I trip.'

"The old man used also to quote the fairy historian, Ben Jonson, who told of a revel, spied upon by a peeping Satyr, hidden behind the trees. Dorothy had many a merry laugh over the way the fairy-queen was depicted by the Satyr.

'This is Mab, the mistress Fairy,
That doth nightly rob the dairy,
And can hurt or help the churning
As she please without discerning.
She that pinches country wenches,
If they rub not clean their benches,
And, with sharper nail, remembers
When they rake not up their embers ;
But if so they chance to feast her,
In a shoe she drops a tester.
This is she that empties cradles,
Takes out children, puts in ladles.' "

"What a fright the mothers must have been in, when they woke up in the morning, to find nothing but a soup-ladle in place of the baby," said Regi. "Do you know any more of Dorothy's favorites to tell me?"

"Rummaging among his old volumes one day, her

grandfather discovered a play or pastoral, called 'Amyntas, or the impossible Dowry,' from which he picked out here and there a plum of fairy-land. In this play there was a foolish shepherd named Jocastus, of whom his friends made sport because he had made up a new game with which to entertain the king of the fairies when he should find him. This game consisted of a masquerade of fleas taught to dance Spanish steps upon a spider's thread, to be followed by a jig of small red ants! This is the way Jocastus and his comrades pictured fairy-land: 'A curious park, paled all around with pick-teeth; a house made of mother-of-pearl; an ivory tennis-court; a nutmeg parlor; a sapphire dairy-room; a ginger hall; chambers of agate; kitchens all of crystal; the jacks are gold; the spits are Spanish needles; then there be walks of amber; curious orchards that bear as well in winter as in summer; above all, the fish-ponds; every pool is full of nectar, every grove stored with delightful birds.'"

"I'd like to go there for the summer holidays," remarked the little boy, whose cheek had crimsoned under the excitement of this glowing imagery.

"To sit back in her old sedan-chair and dream of such things, was the only excursion Dorothy ever made. She used often to repeat to herself some verses about a fairy wedding, and fancy that she was the bridesmaid. Like all young girls, she liked a description of the wedding-gown which, in Tita's case, was made

> 'Of pansy, pink and primrose leaves,
> Most curiously laid on in threaves—'

with a train made of the cast away skin of a snake, and buskins of the crimson 'cow-lady's' wings. Over the bride's head was held a canopy of 'moons from the

peacock's tail,' and she set up housekeeping with a bed of roses, its curtains and draperies fashioned from petals of 'flower-imperial,' fringed with harebells ; and its pillow, a lily stuffed with down from the butterfly's wing. The poet who told of this had perhaps, after Shakespeare, a truer love for the tiny people than any of the English writers, though Herrick, Chaucer, Dryden, Darley, and even the sober Milton, found themselves astray in Elf-land on more than one occasion. It was Drayton who pictured Tita's wedding, and the little blind girl in the dusky shop would sing his words to a tune of her own composing, ending with this refrain,

> 'For our Tita is, to-day,
> To be married to a fay.' "

" Does anybody know what English fairies ate ?" asked Regi, presently.

"Thanks to the poet-spies, we have a good description of their bill of fare. They sat down at little mushroom tables, and were served with countless dainties. Among these I will mention grains of rye and wheat, brains of nightingale served in a nutshell, pearly dew in cups of the acorn, horns of butterflies, bags of honey-bees, ants' eggs and thighs of gnats, the eyeballs of bats and moles, withered cherries, the tears of a stag slaughtered in his own green glade, the heart of a nightingale broken with much music, the sugared pith of rushes, and so on. Their drink was dew for every day, and for festivals cowslip wine served in the chalice of a flower. Both before and after eating, they danced hand in hand around a ring, leaving the grass there, or the moss, greener than that in any other part of field or forest.

'And when the Moon did hide her head,
The Glow-worm lit them home to bed.'

"But you will be dropping into dream-land yourself, if I don't give you something to rouse your blood. It seems to me, in turning over my recollections, that if I were a lad, I should like to hear our old North-Country story of the Lambton Worm."

"What sort of a worm was that?" asked the child.

"Not a worm at all, in your way of thinking, but a curious monster, half snake, half dragon, who several hundred years ago laid waste the borders of the River Wear, in Durham. To begin, I should inform you that this tale, with little variation, has been handed down in the county that gave it birth, and has been printed in ballad form, as well as repeated by fireside of cottage and of castle."

It was during the twelfth century, that the Manor House of Lambton was inhabited by the ancient Lord of Lambton with his wife, son, and daughters. The heir, as the son was called, was a wild, reckless fellow, who liked to defy the opinion of good people, and to make the neighbors stare at his frequent deeds of evil. Especially did he resist all efforts to induce him to attend divine service; and, on Sunday morning, when church bells rang out loud and clear, and from the Hall portal issued forth the noble owner, followed by ladies and knights, squires, pages, grooms, and seneschals, on their way to mass, the graceless heir was never seen among them. Nobody thought of asking wherefore he made not one of their pious procession, nor did the country-folk who, decently and in order, followed the same pleasant path by purling rivulet or

under greenwood tree, venture comment on the absence of their youthful lord. Too well they knew that from year's end to year's end, he never darkened the aisle of holy church by his irreverent shadow, and that if he spoke at all of holy things, it was to make a jest of them. Neither priest nor psalm, neither creed nor ave, was sacred from his ribaldry. The poor lady-mother might cry her soft eyes dim, the sisters might tell their beads and pray for him till they were voiceless, and the heir of Lambton would still scoff at their useless piety.

One joyous Easter Day it was, when birds and chimes were trying which should proclaim the happy morn more noisily, and all the inhabitants of the tranquil valley, attired in holiday array, were church-going, that the heir, a fishing-rod in hand, and a creel slung across his back, went down to try his luck on the banks of the shady Wear. It was a lovely morning, the sun shining bright, the surface of the water rippled by a gentle southwest breeze, trout and salmon giving from time to time a glimpse of their gleaming sides as they hurried across the shallows to seek the river pools. As the young man stood upon the bank, preparing to cast his line, a white-haired peasant, belated on the way to mass in consequence of his limping gait, stopped to ask whether he did not mean to give up idle sport on this, the Church's holiday.

"Not I!" shouted the heir, with a fearful oath, directed against the church. Shuddering, the venerable man passed on, and the youth resumed his efforts; but despite his skill, not so much as a nibble did he have. Both trout and salmon eluded him, and at length, flying into a rage, he vowed he would cast once more, and that should be the last.

This time his zeal was rewarded, for out came a creature, the oddest ever seen, neither fish, nor eel, nor lizard, but a combination of the three. Scarcely an inch and a half in length, of a deep green color, it had rough scales, fins, a long and pointed snout, sharp teeth like needles, feet with pointed claws, short ears, a jointed tail, and eyes like coals of fire.

"So you are the prize I've wasted my time and skill to catch!" said the heir, eyeing it contemptuously.

Close beside him was a crystal spring, welling out of the woodland moss, and into this he cast the creature, thinking to be amused by seeing it grow and develop. By the time he returned there next day, it had already made wonderful progress, having attained a foot and a half in length, while the wings were long and vigorous, and the eyes shot gleams of lurid red. When he attempted again to secure it, the animal darted beneath a stone and disappeared from sight.

Soon after this event, a strange and joyful change came over the blasphemous heir of Lambton. Determining to lead a better life, he confessed his sins to the neighboring priest, threw himself upon his parents' necks in penitential tears, and vowed that, to expiate his evil doings, he would join a band of Crusaders and journey to the Holy Land, there to aid in driving away the infidels. Henceforth his sword was ever foremost in the fray, his influence and example inspired the Christian troops to deeds of noble valor. Many a Paynim warrior, many a doughty Saracen was forced by him to bite the dust of humiliation, and, in joust and tourney, he was renowned above all his comrades.

After a long and brilliant campaign, the red-cross knight returned, flushed with honors, to his native land and to the home of his wayward youth. Upon drawing

near to the familiar neighborhood, he was surprised to see it bare and uncultivated. Instead of the fertile meadows and waving fields of old, there were barren wastes, destitute of cattle or of any living thing, while the doors of the Manor House were barred and bolted, as if the place were deserted. When at length he came into the presence of his family, the heir found them pale and trembling, clinging to each other in terror of woe to come, and according to the returned wanderer but a cold welcome.

"How is this?" the young knight asked, in a wounded tone. "In every other country, and at every other hearth-side where I have appeared, I was made an honored, welcome guest; and here my own receive me in so unkind a fashion!"

"Not so, my son," the old lord cried, clasping him to his breast. "It is not that our hearts are indifferent to the glory of your achievements, and to the pleasure of your return. But wait until you hear of the curse that has fallen upon unhappy Lambton, and you will not wonder at our melancholy. Immediately after you set out on your crusade, there appeared in the neighborhood, apparently issuing from the crystal well near the river's bank, a monstrous Worm, or creature to which we have been able to give no name. It is enormously long, of a dark green color, covered with scales like iron, has two strong black wings, a pointed snout filled with hideous teeth like a crocodile's, webbed feet, hairy ears that stand upright, a jointed tail, and eyes that strike one blind with their terrible red glare! Imagine our dismay when it was found that this monster, not content with inhabiting by night our lovely, peaceful river, would sally forth by day to coil itself three times around the base of Lambton hill, where it

lay roaring like thunder, and lashing its heavy tail upon the ground! Not a spot in the neighborhood of the Hall that was sacred from its fearful visitations. Since no farming-man has been found who was brave enough to venture within reach of the Worm, it has devoured without opposition all our lambs and pigs and fowls, has sucked the milk of our cows, has worried our horses till we are forced to keep the remaining stock shut up in the barns. The entire district north of the river has been laid waste. Agriculture has come to a standstill, and we are in danger of starvation. At one time, the monster, not finding enough to prey upon, approached the outer walls of our own dwelling, roaring frightfully. We held a council in-doors, hastily deciding to fill a long trough with the milk of nine cows, placing it at a distance from the house, in the hope of appeasing our enemy. This done, the creature gorged himself freely; but alas! since that day, he has come regularly to demand the same provision. If we are slow to supply it, the lashing of his tail upon the ground hastens us, and his baleful eyes shoot fire in our direction, while trees torn up by the roots, large rocks flung hither and thither, and wrathful hissings, show what our fate will be should we deny him. More than once, certain champions, hearing of our woeful plight, have ridden hither to engage the enemy, but after desperate battles have abandoned the attempt to conquer him, since wherever he is struck the wound heals, and his dismembered portions unite again in a surface stronger than a coat of mail."

The heir bethought him for a space, and suddenly there flashed upon him the memory of the creature he had fished out of the river on the day, several years before, when he had cursed the holy Church.

"My sin has followed me!" he cried, in a sorrowful tone. "It is I, oh, my father, who have brought this scourge upon you, and I must rid you of it, or die in the attempt."

So, without tarrying for food or rest, he set out to visit the retreat of a famous soothsayer, a venerable hag, whose wisdom the peasants held in awe. The night was dark, and the wind moaned drearily, as the knight strode forward, through brake and fen, to reach the ruined hut overgrown with briers and wild vines, wherein the witch cowered above a dying fire. He made known his errand, offering her gold in plenty, if she would find out for him a way to slay the detested Worm. Blowing up her embers till, in their ruddy glow, she could read the knight's countenance, and trace the lines of his palm, the crone pondered long and wistfully.

"There is but one chance for you," she said, at length, in a queer quavering voice. "You must have made a suit of armor, thickly set with the blades of razors both before and behind, and carry in your hand the sword with which in foreign lands you slew the paynim foe. Then, before setting out for the scene of the conflict, make to the holy Virgin a solemn vow that, should you be victorious, whatever living thing comes first forth to meet you on your return to Lambton Hall, shall be sacrificed to her."

The heir, promising to obey her bidding, bestowed upon his ancient counsellor a rich purse of gold, then, returning home, carried out her instructions faithfully.

On the day fixed by him to challenge the monster, the heir arrayed himself from head to foot in glittering steel, set all around with the blades of sharp razors; and, with gorget closed, vizor set, and sword in his

strong right hand, he seemed indeed invincible. When he bade adieu to the household at the Hall, loud and long were the lamentations heard. Then, while the women went down upon their knees to pray and the men watched in strained anxiety, the old lord paced the floor back and forth, a prey to cruel fears. Not a sound broke the sickening silence within doors, each one dreading to speak his mind. All believed their gallant champion had gone forth to meet a hero's death.

Forward trod the dauntless heir, to seek the favorite resting-place of the monster, where the witch had told him the battle must be fought. On a rock, rising from the middle of the river which eddied and swirled around its base, lay the terrible Worm of Lambton, coiled in massive folds, his wings hanging flat, his ears drooped, everything bespeaking repose except the glare of the fiery eyes, which closed not, day or night!

As the knight, with sword unsheathed, plunged into the water to wade to the rock, the monster, starting up, saw the morning sun gleam upon his enemy's glittering armor. At once, spreading his wings, he made the valley echo with a cry of awful portent. Bristling his scaly back, curling high his jointed tail, showing every one of his death-dealing pointed teeth, snarling furiously, the monster prepared to attack. As the knight brandished his sword, his terrible enemy sprang forward, his tail lashing the rock with the blows of a sledge-hammer. But, quick of eye and swift of foot, the knight avoided the assault, dealing in return a fierce thrust at the creature, who, again and again, charged upon the knight, each time bravely repelled; till, after a long and wearing conflict, the heir of Lambton owned to himself that his strength was spent. When he could strike no more, the brand dropped from

"The monster, starting up, saw the morning sun gleam upon his enemy's glittering armour."

his exhausted hand. And now, rising up to darken the sky like a cloud, and uttering a second and more appalling cry, the monster winnowed the air with his wings, then swooped upon his prey. Staggering beneath the weight, the knight fell prostrate on the rock, to be encircled from head to foot in iron coils, till his armor cracked beneath the pressure. But now, pierced in his entire length by the razor blades, the monster's blood began to flow freely, while his flesh quivered convulsively. Limb by limb, section by section, his dissevered body fell into the rushing stream, that now ran red with gore, till only the head of the Worm remained, his bloody teeth gripping the knight's armor, his eyes rolling horribly. At last, with a fearful groan, he relinquished his hold, the lurid gleam went out of the protruding eyes, and the head dropped like a stone into the water!

His enemy, the fearful foe of Lambton Hall, was conquered in fair fight, and, seizing his horn, the knight blew a loud clear blast to announce his victory to the watchers. Wounded and bleeding, he gathered up his strength to return homeward, and with eager gaze scanned the approach to Lambton Hall. There, issuing forth to meet the victor, was a joyous throng, eager to bestow upon him their thanks and plaudits; and cleaving a way amid the crowd, demanding as his right to be first, came his venerable father!

The knight stopped short as the remembrance of his vow rushed through him like a dart. "Loosen my hound!" he shouted in a voice of thunder, which the servants of the Hall were prompt to obey; and as the faithful animal, bounding and barking, ran before the old lord to fawn upon her master, his sword pierced her heart. With a sorrowful countenance, the knight

explained his vow, and while the hound expired at his feet, the old lord, raising his hands on high, called down Heaven's blessing upon their gallant champion.

But the knight, knowing in his heart that he had evaded the real performance of his vow, again sought the witch in the forest, to ask her counsel. Heavy-hearted, he learned that, in consequence of his failure to kill his father, a curse would fall upon nine generations of his house to come.

> "They may die in the fight, or in the chase,
> But not in their native hall,"

said the sybil; and her prediction has been fulfilled. The heir of Lambton built forthwith a chapel to our Lady, surpassing in splendor and in rich endowment any that had been seen in that part of the country; and day after day, year after year, masses were said, bells were tolled, candles were burnt, incense was spent, to ward away the curse, but all in vain. According to popular tradition, each head of the family, down to the ninth in descent from a certain gallant Lambton, knight of Rhodes, died away from his bed at home. At Lambton Castle, in Durham, was long preserved an antique figure representing a knight armed cap-a-pie, the rear of his armor thickly studded with spear-points, and holding in one hand the head of a monstrous serpent, having ears, legs, and wings—while with the other hand he drew a sword from its throat. Perhaps, if you journey thither, you may see it still, as well as Worm Hill, which the famous Worm was said to encircle during his hours of ease.

"Is it a little hill?"

"Not exactly; neither is it very big."

"How big around, do you think?"

"Say, in circumference about four blocks of your Fifth Avenue; and suppose the serpent to have coiled around it more than once!"

"Wh-e-w!" came in a whistle of amazement.

THE SCOTCH HUNTING-HORN'S STORY.

Regi took up a small horn, tipped with metal, and banded with Cairngorm pebbles. Turning it over in an absent-minded way, he lifted it to his lips, essaying to bring a sound from the long silent interior, which resulted in but a melancholy toot.

"Thank you for clearing my throat for me," said the hunting-horn. "What with disuse and dust, I had become so hoarse, I did not expect ever to make any noise in the world again. But ah! in my time I have set the wild echoes flying amid the loveliest scenery you can imagine, try as you may. Need I say that I allude to my beloved native country—the land of cloud-capt mountains and of purple moors, of mist and sunshine, calm and storm—of dark and silent tarns, of lofty waterfalls, and silver burnies——"

"Please," interrupted Regi in a melancholy tone. "If all of you would not waste so much time telling me how things look, I should like it better."

"Of course, if you have no love for the beauties of nature," answered the horn, "it is wind wasted as well as time, on my part."

"It isn't that," persisted the little boy; "but I can never quite understand how they look. It isn't like pictures. Now I never tire of pictures, and when I am in the country, or at the sea, I feel as if everything were

opening before me and stretching far, far away into some dream-land. I always want to walk over rainbow bridges, and to come sliding down a sunbeam, home again—don't you?"

"Eh?" said the surprised horn. "Then, if you are not destitute of imagination, it must be that we are lacking in descriptive power."

"I don't know," answered the lad, simply. "It is nicer to fancy how things look for one's self than to be told, I think. But as I know you come from Scotland, and that you were bought there by my father's brother when he was travelling in his college holidays, I believe you can tell me a great deal I want to hear."

"Yes, my last owner was a fine young fellow, fit to have been a true son of Scotia, instead of a rambler in her hills, merely. He was strong and vigorous, tramping from dawn to dark over the heather, hunting, fishing, wading the streams, losing himself on the hill-sides in the mist, and often, wrapped in a plaid, making his bed contentedly on the moss, under the light of our big bright Highland stars. He had a great fashion of wandering off into remote cottages, and sitting there to talk with their owners. I remember we stopped once in a house built of turf and clay, with a hard-packed earthen floor, and a roof black as the chimney-back with smoke and soot. Under the rafters hung dried fish, herbs, onions, splinters of bog-fir, and rush-pith for candles. Around the fire sat the people who, after their work was done and put away, did nothing but ask riddles and guess them, till it was time for bed."

"Ask me a riddle," Regi cried.

"I can only remember this one," the hunting-horn replied.

"Hobbity-bobbity sits on this side o' the burn,
Hobbity-bobbity sits on that side o' the burn,
And if ye touch hobbity-bobbity,
Hobbity-bobbity 'll bite ye."

"I give it up," shouted Regi, after due pondering. "If I were a Scotch fellow now, or if I knew what burn means, I'm pretty sure I should have got it."

"You need not be a Scotch fellow to know that burn means what in New England you call a brook, in the Southern States a 'run.'"

"What was Hobbity-bobbity, anyway?" pursued the boy, ignoring explanations.

"Hobbity-bobbity was neither more nor less than a nettle."

"I've had plenty of his bites, before I put on long stockings. If you could just have seen my legs last summer, with mosquitoes and nettles and blackberry vines! Goodness! The only comfort I had was when Bran sat and licked 'em."

"If you had lived in Scotland, they might have said you were shot with elf-arrows. Yes! ours is the country for traditions."

"So they all say, each about his own country," remarked the boy, judicially.

"Speaking of elf-arrows," resumed the hunting-horn, "reminds me of a tale told to your uncle once, when he went into a cottage to have a gnat taken out of his eye. The woman of the house, after removing the obstruction and bathing the inflamed eye, insisted on touching it with an amber bead, taken down from the cupboard shelf. This bead was an amulet belonging to her grandmother, she said, and kept in the family to ward off fairy arrows flying after nightfall. Your uncle laughed, and then she told him of a girl who, going

home once in the gloaming, saw a hillock covered with daisies, from which came the sweetest music, together with gleams of light. Full of curiosity, the girl lingered and beheld a train of elfin creatures issue forth, with long fair hair hanging upon their shoulders, or fastened with combs of gold. They were dressed in green, embroidered in patterns of wild flowers, and wore silver shoes—carrying bows and, in quivers made of snake-skin slung across their shoulders, arrows tipped with flint and poisoned with hemlock—so tradition said! Among these fairies the girl recognized a little person who, more than once, had appeared at her mammy's door, borrowing meal or milk (which was scrupulously returned next day); but, not daring to speak, she held her breath and waited to see what would follow. To her great delight, elfin grooms next led out of the mound tiny white horses, with silver manes and tails, on which some of the fairies mounted, testing their bow-strings before setting out for the hunt. Others remained to place a green table with golden feet, across a rivulet, and to spread it with fine bread, wine, and a hundred fairy delicacies. Then came a band of musicians in green jackets, with feathers in their caps, who played upon instruments made of reeds and the stalks of corn. By and by, the hunters came back, dragging a young fawn they had shot all over with tiny arrows. The venison was roasted, and at the delicious smell arising from their cookery the girl smacked her lips, exclaiming aloud "Save my share." At this, the angry little people fell upon her, dragged her about, and finally let her go, after shooting out her right eye with a single well-aimed dart.

"But here am I, forgetting that you must have had enough of fairy tales. What do you say to the Black-

smith of Yarrowfoot and his two apprentices, who were tormented by a witch?"

In a peaceful country neighborhood dwelt a worthy blacksmith, who had for a wife a buxom lively woman. They had no children, and the only other members of their household were two brothers, hearty fellows when they were apprenticed to the smith; but by the end of the first year, the younger brother began to grow sickly. He made no complaint, though day after day, the ruddy color left his face, his cheeks became thin, while his eyes were starting from his head. He was as tired when he got up in the morning, as if he had been doing a double day's work, instead of resting in his bed.

"This won't do," said the elder brother to him one day. "You'll soon be giving up work for good, if it goes on; and I promised our daddy to look out for you. Every time I've asked about yourself, you've sworn that nothing ailed you. Now, I must know the truth; or I'll speak my mind out before the master and mistress, and get you sent away."

For some time, the youth refused to speak, but at last, taking his brother with him to a secluded spot, he revealed a dreadful state of things. What should appear, but that their mistress was a witch, who every night, when the poor lad sought his pallet, ordered him to get up and go into the stable, where, changing him into a horse, she jumped upon his back, to ride him like mad around the country-side till cock-crow. To witch festivals, to hob and nob with many a spirit of evil, the luckless fellow was thus carried; and scarcely did he, fagged and aching, seek his bed at dawn, before

"A wild gallop was that, over ploughed fields and stony glens, up hill and down."

it was time to be up again and about his daily business.

When the elder brother heard this sad tale, he was much troubled in trying to devise a scheme whereby to relieve the sufferer. Both knew that to expose the witch openly, would be to bring down upon themselves a lifetime of trouble from her trickery. At last, the brother hit upon a plan. One night, he crept into the bewitched lad's bed, sending him to sleep comfortably in his own. He had taken the precaution to hang around his neck some sprigs of mistletoe and rowan ; and when at midnight the blacksmith's wife, carrying in her hand a thick hazel wand, appeared at his bedside, he meekly got up and followed her to the stable, submitting to be bridled and changed into a horse, which she instantly saddled and rode away.

A wild gallop was that, over ploughed fields and stony glens, up hill and down, at the same furious pace, the witch belaboring his sides with her hazel stick to urge him forward, till they arrived at the cellar of a deserted house, where green lights were dancing within, and shrieks of discordant laughter issued from behind the moss-grown walls. Tying her steed in the stall of a ruined stable, the witch joined her comrades, and ere long they were plunged into the thick of an uncanny conference. But you are not to think these witches were all old mumbling women riding upon broomsticks ! Some there were among them as young and pretty as the blacksmith's wife. She, by the way, was the chief personage at the feast, in her red petticoat, her blue waistcoat, her jaunty ruff band, and the cross-cloth on her neatly plaited hair. One after another, the witches told their tales and gave in their reports of mischief done. One of them had caused the

farmer's sheep to grow giddy and roll upon the ground; another had stolen the miller's eels; another had smitten her neighbor's hogs with mumps; still another had made the parson's beautiful young daughter fall into a trance, recovering from which the girl had cast up all manner of needles, pins, stones, stubs, wool and straw. In conclusion, the blacksmith's wife pulled out of her pocket the ugly root of a mandrake, resembling a man's face, the roots hanging down to represent the beard, announcing that this was the image of her husband, whom she next intended to bewitch. Then the witches, laughing gleefully, promised to aid her in the work, and the dance began.

The elder brother, left standing in his stall, had managed to rub his head against the wall until the bridle fell to the ground; upon which, to his great joy, he became again a man. Carrying the bridle in his hand, he stole to a chink in the cellar wall, there witnessing all I have described. Filled with horror, he resolved to punish the sorceress, and as she came out of the orgie, intending to remount her steed, he clapped the bewitched bridle over her head, converting her at once into a powerful gray mare. Leading her, kicking and plunging tremendously, into the stable, he put on the saddle and jumped into it. Then gathering up the reins, he struck her a hearty blow upon the ribs. The mare bounded off, and, without mercy, her rider cudgelled her until she tore at top-speed over the road by which they came. As they neared the blacksmith's house, he turned her into a ploughed field and rode up and down at full gallop, until she was dropping from fatigue. Then, leading her into the smithy, he nailed on her fore-feet a pair of stout horse-shoes and let her go.

Next day, the blacksmith's wife kept her bed, and the

apprentices went about their work as usual. Toward noon, the blacksmith insisted on fetching the physician to see his poor ill wife, which was done in spite of her remonstrance. When the doctor arrived, he found the woman covered up to the neck with bed-clothes and groaning piteously. Of course, the first thing he asked to do, was to feel the patient's pulse, but this the witch refused, protesting might and main she would not be disturbed. "Stuff!" said the doctor, who could not afford to waste his time on nonsense. So, pulling down the clothes, he uncovered her hands in her husband's presence, and there were two bran new horse-shoes nailed to the flesh!

The miserable witch, seeing herself detected, confessed her guilt, and was shortly brought to trial at Selkirk, condemned, tied up in a flour-sack and dropped into the mill-pond—after which the blacksmith and the two apprentices lived in peace for many a day.

So much for witches, unless it would amuse you to hear of another one, who was a tailor's wife. Her husband, also, had apprentices, who ate their meals at the tailor's table. Many a time, the lads wondered why the tailor, who had no cow, should be served with the richest milk in the neighborhood; and once when the mistress went to the back of the house to fetch a jugful, they followed her, to spy upon her movements. What they discovered was certainly surprising. The woman had only to turn a wooden peg in the rear wall of the house, when immediately out gushed a stream of frothing milk, which she turned off when enough had been drawn. That day, the apprentices feeling thirsty, one of them determined to try his own luck

with the wooden peg. Again the milk flowed out abundantly, but when the jug was full, he could not, in any way, succeed in stopping the ready torrent. In alarm, he called upon his fellow-workers for assistance, but all in vain. The milk flowed on. Every tub and bucket in the house was pressed into service, and when they were all full the milk ran to waste upon the ground. At this juncture, the mistress returned and, casting a look black as thunder upon the apprentices, she muttered a few words over the peg-hole, when at once the flow of milk was stopped.

"Don't you know, vagabonds, that you've drawn the milk of every cow between the head of Yarrow and the foot of it?" she exclaimed, angrily; and then, remembering herself, she flounced away without farther disclosure. But enough had been said to set the apprentices to gossiping among themselves. They were now certain of what they had before suspected, that the gude-wife was a witch. That day a howl arose from the farmers along the banks of Yarrow. Every cow belonging to them had mysteriously gone dry. And from that day forth, the curious apprentices got nothing for their dinners but "chappit taties and cauld kale" (*i.e.*, chopped-up potatoes, with cold boiled greens), but not a drop of milk, good, bad or indifferent, to wash it down with.

"And now for a border story, into which I shall try to weave the substance of two ancient ballads of high renown, 'The Colt of Keeldar' and 'Lord Soulis.'"

In his stronghold at Hermitage Castle, lived William, Lord Soulis, a powerful baron of the olden time,

known as a sorcerer and believed to be in league with such mighty powers of evil that, no matter how cruel and tyrannical his actions, no matter how valiant and skilled his foe, it was impossible to do him harm. It was said that the only possible adversary Soulis respected, was the chief of Keeldar (a Northumbrian district adjoining Cumberland), a man of vast stature with great activity and strength, popularly styled the Cout or Colt. Keeldar's young wife lived perpetually in dread of an encounter between her lord and the crafty Soulis; and, whenever he rode abroad upon his hunting expeditions, she would implore him to avoid crossing the pathway of the cruel enchanter, whose battle-axe was formed of a wonderful stone found in a bed of red earth, and whose sword, with its hilt of adderstone, was said to insure its owner against all mortal danger.

One autumn morning, when the sun rose red as blood above the mountains guarding Keeldar's castle, the chief made his preparations for the customary chase. Huntsmen were rallying in the court-yard, horses chafed upon their bits, hounds uttered impatient yelps to be off, now and again sounded the shrill note of the horn. All was bustle and excitement, but Keeldar still tarried in his lady's bower, held there, if the truth must be told, very much against the will of the eager sportsman, whose blood was up for a hard day in the saddle.

More anxious than ever before was the poor young lady, since during the night a blood-hound had howled beneath her window, surely a sign of evil to come. She asked Keeldar many questions about the course he meant to follow; and when he confessed it was in a quarter across the border, where Soulis might be met,

poor Margaret broke down in tearful lamentations. Kissing away her tears, Keeldar laughed at her alarm.

"And what if Soulis carries a hilt of adderstone, and an axe of earth-bound flint," he said. "Hast thou forgotten, lady love, that the casque I wear was made by mermaids beneath the sea, and that in it I have set a branch of rowan mixed with holly, against which no sorcery can avail? Come, cheer up, and let thy husband see a smile before he leaves thee."

With this, Margaret was forced to be content. But she bore about with her a heavy heart that day, and her maidens whispered and wondered, praying that no evil might befall their handsome lord.

Full of life and spirit, young Keeldar put spurs to his horse, bounding so far ahead of his followers that, leaving the English fells behind him, he was soon beyond sight of them. Thus it came about that, alone, save for his hounds, he reached the moor at the foot of Redswire mountain. Far as the eye could reach rolled the swelling moorland carpeted with reddish-purple heath. Above, the frowning mountains met the clouds. It was a scene of awful solitude; and, familiar as is this aspect of nature to the huntsman, Keeldar felt, he knew not why, a sense of unaccustomed gloom steal over him. He longed for cheerful company, and, putting his bugle to his lips, awoke the echoes of Redswire. His only answer was the scream of birds disturbed in their mountain eyries; and, sounding a second blast, he was surprised to be aware of an instant lull in the brisk wind, like the calm that goes before a storm. Nothing in nature stirred save the withering ferns that shuddered under foot. At a third blast, even the ferns stood motionless; and, from behind a large gray rock,

there started up a swarthy little man of most forbidding aspect.

> " His russet weeds were brown as heath
> That clothes the upland fell ;
> And the hair of his head was frizzly red
> As the purple heather bell."

Upon the arm of the dwarf clung a hedgehog covered with tawny prickles ; and, at sight of this uncanny pair, Keeldar's hounds howled aloud, flying in an opposite direction, while his horse gave every evidence of fear.

" Who dares awake the morning here, with note of horn and stag-hound's cry, without my leave ?" cried the wee man, angrily.

" I might better answer you, if I knew your name, and your right to lay down laws," said Keeldar, boldly.

" Enough for you to know that I am the Brown Man of the Moors, and that my home is underneath the heather bell," was the response, still in the same harsh voice. " But this let me tell you, that, as I choose to live here far from the sound of mortal voice, so I bitterly resent any intrusion on my domain, and woe betide the hunter I chance first to hear breaking the silence of these hills at morning. Accursed be the bugle that rouses me from repose ! It were better for you never to have been born than to have blown that blast."

Keeldar's threatening antagonist appeared to him so insignificant, that he laughed aloud ; whereupon the Brown Man, quivering with rage, disappeared beneath the stone. And now, with rapid gallop, Keeldar's band drew near ; and, when he told them the story of his adventure, the merry fellows began to wheel around the stone on horseback, calling upon the Brown Man to show himself again.

A curious stone was this, rocking with every breeze that blew, and overgrown around the base with thick green vervain. To the more fanciful among Keeldar's followers, it seemed that the channels worn by time upon the surface of the granite were stained as by the flow of blood. Upon the top and in the crevices of the rocking-stone, sprang a close growth of grayish moss; and, to their dismay, on approaching it more nearly, the moss was found to be bespattered with drops like human gore. At this token, a superstitious awe seized upon the band. They ceased to mock and call upon the dwarf; and at the same moment the crag rocked and a voice came from under it, speaking in solemn accents.

"Thou hast defied me, Keeldar! I shall bring about thy ruin, and the ruin of thy scoffing followers."

"Let us ride hence, my brave comrades. We do but waste time from the hunt," cried Keeldar, mustering up his courage to speak as if he were indifferent; and, without a word in answer, his huntsmen put spurs to horse and galloped after him.

Away, away from the eerie solitude beneath Redswire mountain, fast as stout steeds would carry them, they passed, across moor and meadow, by brook-side, by the stone cross on the lea, by the burial-place of forgotten warriors, through the birch wood, till they came out into an open vale. On the far side of a rushing mountain river, arose a castle of gloomy aspect, shut behind frowning walls, around which no signs of life were visible. The silence, the isolation of this grim abode, suggested a prison rather than a home.

While the Northumbrian knight and his followers paused to survey the scene, a messenger was seen to leave the castle and cross the space between them.

"My master bids you welcome," he said, when within speaking distance. "He was walking in his garden to enjoy the freshness of the day, when he heard your bugle call. He bids me say that you must join our festive board, since never was it the custom of Soulis of Liddesdale to neglect the rites of hospitality to a stranger knight who came so near his dwelling."

A thrill ran through the veins of Keeldar and his band when they found themselves about to be the guests of the redoubtable, the dreaded Soulis of Liddesdale. To refuse his offer would be an insult they dared not risk, so close to the famous dungeons and torture-rooms of Hermitage Castle. Before returning an answer to the messenger, Keeldar called his train around him and gave them counsel.

"We have run into a trap, my comrades," he said in an undertone. "Which among you has forgotten our friend, the hapless Mangerton, surprised by the bull's head brought forward at one of Soulis's banquets, and slaughtered on the spot. Let us demean ourselves like brave men and true, whatever be the issue, and while we sit at meat let every one have his hunting-knife ready to plunge into his neighbor's treacherous breast, if the accursed bull's head shows his horns." This advice met the approval of all of Keeldar's men, who understood, better than you do, perhaps, that a bull's frontlet brought forward on a silver dish, in the course of one of those old border banquets, was the signal for attack upon the guests. Gritting their teeth, and riding with heads well up—albeit with stoutly thumping hearts beneath their hunting-jackets, I dare say—the gallant huntsmen followed their lord across the drawbridge of the sorcerer's stronghold.

And soon, behold them gathered around a great

table in a hall lighted by many candles ; minstrels grouped at one end of it to play during the repast ; the board heaped with haunches of venison, mighty salmon, meat and pastries, in lavish profusion. When the hunters' appetites were stayed, there were passed around massive goblets of red wine, all drinking until tongues were loosed to join in a chorus of song that made the rafters ring. At the head of his feast sat Soulis, the terrible ; but surely none could fear a knight who bestowed upon his guests so suave a welcome ! He talked little ; but no movement of the scene escaped those deep-set eyes, gleaming like embers in his pale and sunken face, between straggling locks of jet black hair.

Before the echoes of a jovial hunting glee had fairly ceased, the minstrels began to sing a plaintive old ballad "Of Scotland's luve and lee." While yet the listeners sat pensive beneath its spell, the measure quickly changed. What tune was this they heard ? Could it be—by Heaven, there was no mistaking it !—"The Black, Black Bull of Noroway." And, in answer to the strain, the door flew open to admit the steward bearing aloft a silver dish containing the fatal emblem !

With a crash, the music ceased ; the lights went out, every man's fingers clutched his knife-hilt, but ere the bold hunters of Keeldar's train could strike a death-blow for deliverance, a cruel spell fell upon them, causing the life-blood to freeze within their veins, the hands holding whingers to fall rigid by their sides, the eyes full of sudden horror to stare into vacancy. Of all the gallant band, the chief alone sprang up unharmed and alert. Wearing the casque made by magic hands beneath the sea, and crowned with a sprig of

rowan, Keeldar was safe from the power of enchantment. Striding fearlessly amid the hostile groups, past the sorcerer himself, and holding his sword unsheathed in his strong right arm, Keeldar burst through the iron portal of the castle, in his fury to be free. But he had not fully acquainted himself with the horrid device by which Soulis retained an unwilling guest. Directly without the portal yawned a gulf, where, far below, a mill wheel set with blades was seen revolving rapidly, the iron plate that covered it rolling back with a grating, jarring noise, at the first touch of departing footsteps! Into this living tomb, the chief of Keeldar's unhappy band would have inevitably fallen, but that his favorite hound, bounding before him, incurred the fate intended for his master. The treacherous Soulis, listening within, hearing no human cry issue from his death-trap amid the yelpings of the dying hound, suspected that his enemy had escaped. Throwing wide the castle doors, he ordered his men to follow Keeldar and surround him. And here ensued an exploit the most valiant known to border warfare. Fighting with resistless valor, Keeldar, with his sword alone, held his own against a band of glittering lances, dealing such furious strokes that his way was strewn with corpses. Then Soulis himself aimed a blow at Keeldar with the battle-axe of earth-fast flint, which, however, proved as ineffectual as did an assault with his sword of adderstone hilt. Thus, backing and fighting, Keeldar was driven to the river's edge.

"And now heaven be my aid!" the knight said in his heart. "If I can but clear this stream, I fear them not."

But at this critical moment, who should rise from the

ground to grin and gibber at Lord Soulis's side, but the Brown Man of the Moors!

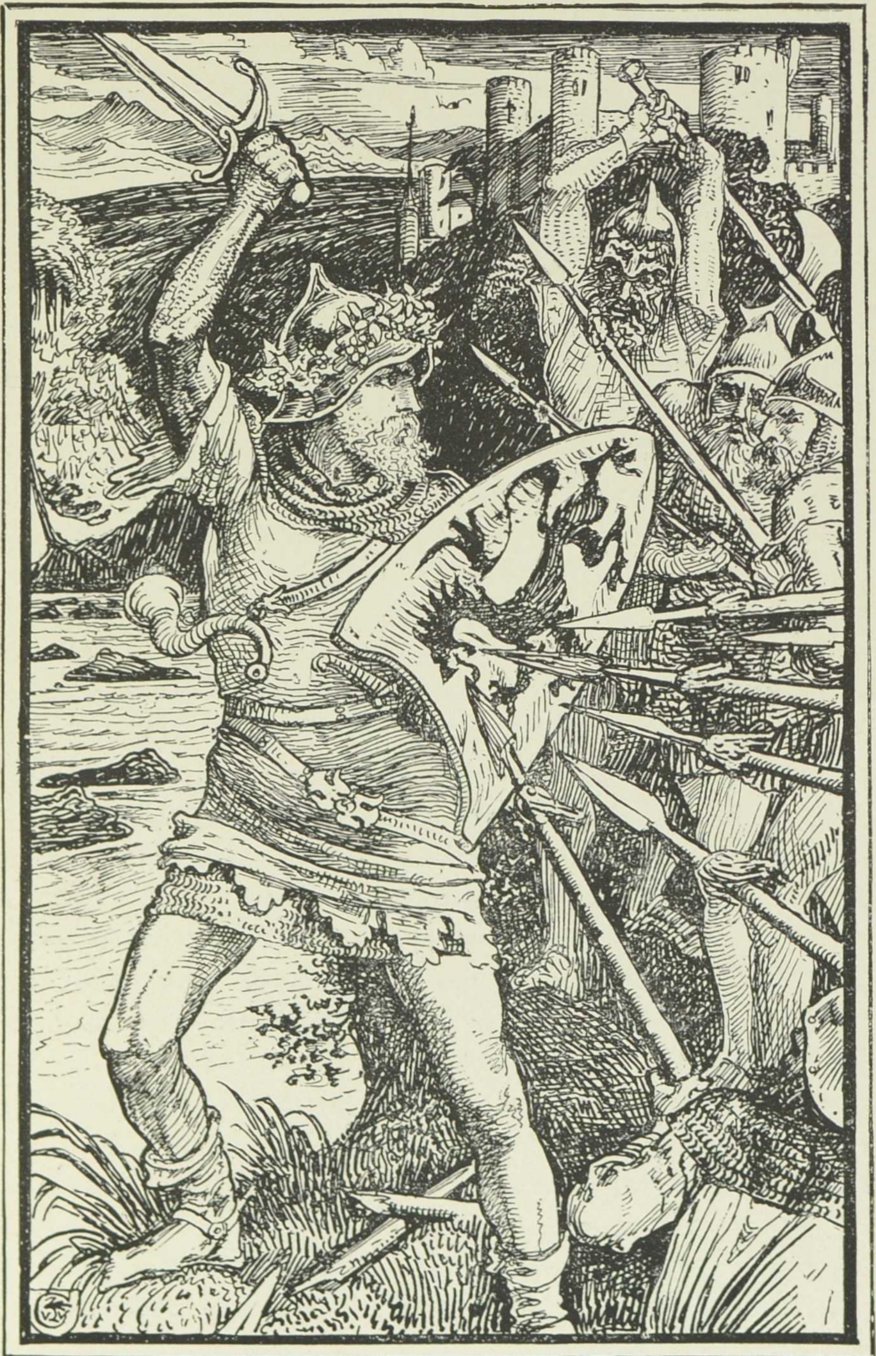
"Did I not warn thee, Keeldar!" he cried in his croaking voice. "And must it be that I need inform Soulis of Liddesdale that holly leaf and rowan, although worn in a casque fashioned beneath the sea, can no longer protect their wearer, when he comes to *running water?*"

Alas for gallant Keeldar! Uttering a shout of triumph, the ruffians closed around him, and with their lances forced him into the foaming river. Becoming detached from his casque, the "holly leaf and rowan pale" floated down the stream. Fought was the last fight of the mighty "Cout!"

Long the Lady Margaret waited and watched for the returning of her lord. Neither he, nor horse, nor hound, nor any single man of the gay riders of the morning, came ever home again.

They found Keeldar's body, pierced by a hundred lance-wounds, lying where the water had cast it upon a bank of turf, and there they buried him. In this very spot, where silver birches bend and weep, and where daisies grow amid the greenest grass, the outline of a gigantic mound is pointed out to-day, as the Cout o' Keeldar's grave.

> "And the hunters bold, of Keeldar's train,
> Within yon castle's wall,
> In deadly sleep must aye remain,
> Till the ruined towers down fall.
>
> "Each in his hunter's garb arrayed,
> Each holds his bugle horn;
> Their keen hounds at their feet are laid,
> That ne'er shall wake the morn."



"The ruffians closed around him, and with their lances forced him into the foaming river."

"Keeldar was grand!" exclaimed the boy; "oh! I could listen to stories like that all night. If you could only tell me one about somebody, I don't care who, getting the better of Soulis of Liddesdale! And that little Brown Man of the Moors! He must have been a crusty fellow, if he couldn't take a joke."

"So far as I know, the Brown Man lived to spite many another traveller. He was supposed to be the most unforgiving and malignant of the race of Scottish dwarfs. But the punishment that fell to Soulis in the end was enough to satisfy the least forgiving of poor Keeldar's friends. And, since I come of a proverbially long-winded family, I need make no excuse for extending my narrative. Well, then—"

Often as this wretch had, with impunity, defied his king, oppressed his vassals, and insulted the neighboring lords, there came a time when his neighbors felt they could bear the yoke no more. So a number of the most prominent and trustworthy among them waited on King James, asking protection from the crown, or at least for a royal warning to the wizard of what would be his fate, did he not desist from his scandalous outrages.

The king, promising what they desired, fell into a great rage, swearing that if he heard one more complaint against Soulis, the wizard should be delivered up to them to meet whatever punishment they might devise.

Thus it came about, that one day Lord Soulis sat, oppressed and ill at ease, in his chamber at Hermitage Castle. For some time past, a change had come over his confident demeanor. He was forever pondering

upon the mysterious hint lately given to him by his familiar counsellor, Redcap, a wicked household spirit he was in the habit of consulting about the diabolical schemes he planned.

"So long as you owe your strength to powers of evil," were the words of warning spoken by Redcap, "you bear a charmed life. We will warrant you against knife and sword, lance and arrow. No steel that ever was forged can hold your limbs in bondage, nor can hempen rope confine you. But should your enemies find out the virtue of a rope made of sifted sand, our power is at an end. If an hour should come, when danger presses hard upon you, resort to the ancient chest with rusty padlocks that stands in the warlock chamber, knocking thrice upon the lid. Look not within the chest when the lid arises, but listen to what the voice thou knowest well, shall tell thee."

Since the day when he received Redcap's caution, the Lord of Liddesdale had kept up a keen watch in every quarter whence it was possible that danger might come. Nervous and moody, he sat alone, till at length, calling to his side a page who was quick of wit, he dispatched him upon the tower to see if any living creature were in sight, and, were it a horseman, to fetch word promptly what livery he wore.

The page ran up upon the watch-tower and looked afar. Beneath him were solitary moors, stretching to meet dun hills. No sound broke the silence but the song of birds and the flow of the foaming river.

"I saw nothing but a crow perched upon a broken limb, my lord," the page reported.

"Go back again, you little foot-page, and slacken not your watch," was the response.

This time, the page beheld a dashing horseman, clad

in the royal livery, come galloping over the plain. He ran hastily to inform his lord, and at once Soulis was on the alert. When the messenger reached the draw-bridge, he was challenged from the castle wall to tell his business speedily.

"I have come from my royal master, Scotland's King," answered the horseman, in a ringing voice that all might hear. "I am bidden to mince no words with Soulis of Hermitage, but to tell that bloody murderer that King James is tired of hearing complaints against him from his lieges, high and low; and that upon the next grievance of this sort coming before his Majesty, Soulis shall die."

Having spoken thus defiantly, the messenger turned to ride away, but his bridle rein was seized by lurking assassins, and, without parley, horse and rider were plunged beneath the key-stone of that vault where many another bold trooper had met his fate before! This done, Soulis of Liddesdale laughed scoffingly, and, mounting his steed, rode forth upon a foray around the country-side, resolved, by some new act of daring cruelty, to show King James how little he feared the royal menace.

At Goranberry Towers, there lived a beautiful maiden named May, whose father had promised her in marriage to the young heir of Branxholme in Teviotdale. And what wicked scheme should Soulis concoct and carry out that day, but to make a raid upon the unprotected castle of Goranberry, to seize in her bower the terrified daughter of the house, and bear her struggling and screaming before him on his horse to the grim seclusion of the Hermitage!

"Welcome to your new abode, fairest of damsels," he said with a cruel smile, as he set his captive down.

"Methinks, it were no small boast to call yourself the bride of Soulis of Liddesdale!"

When she heard the name of her abductor, May uttered a shriek of anguish, imploring him to set her free, and saying that her troth was plighted to Branxholme, who had long possessed her heart. At this, Soulis, smiling still more, assured her that she had better try to be content with the home he had provided for her, since it was his purpose to set Branxholme Castle on fire, and to destroy her lover before another sun could rise. Leaving the unhappy girl to stanch her fast-trickling tears with the golden hair that fell about her shoulders, Soulis went out and summoned to him a sturdy knave called Ringan Red, famed in border feuds for his pluck and cunning. To Ringan he entrusted the charge of a company of spearmen, who were directed to lie in wait for Branxholme's heir, in a certain quarter of the forest he was likely to pass in hunting.

Little thought Branxholme's heir that morning when he set forth so gaily to shoot the roebuck, of where he should sup that night! Still less dreamed he of the fate befalling his dearest love, who sat weeping her heart away behind the walls of Castle Hermitage. The young laird roamed over lea and hill-side until day was closing in, before he came in sight of a band of men and, taking them to be his own followers, summoned them merrily. Was it a glamour that came over his eyes, or did the westering sun so shine as to dazzle them, that he rode straight forward into danger without perceiving his mistake. With a yell, Ringan's men closed around the object of their hunt, and sent him, in charge of a couple of stalwart troopers, a prisoner to Soulis' castle, while they rode forward intending to set fire to Branxholme Towers before the next day's

sun should rise. Soulis received his handsome captive with a sneering courtesy.

"Thrice welcome, heir of Branxholme!" cried the sorcerer. "You have come, I fancy, to be present at my wedding with the lovely May, who now awaits me in the bower above. By my faith, May deserves a bridesman as young and gallant as thou art!"

Branxholme was cast into a cell to await events; and, at daybreak next morning, Lord Soulis was aroused by the page, who told him that Ringan Red alone, of all his picked company of spearmen, had been descried riding homeward in hot haste. At this, Soulis' face fell, and he hurried out to receive his favorite, now alighting before the gate.

"But what have you done with my troopers, and where have you stabled my steeds?" he cried anxiously.

"The men are stabled with the horses," answered Ringan Red in a sombre voice. "As we were crossing Tarras Moor, they sank in the bog beneath the quaking moss, and all are lost but me."

Soulis spoke not a word in answer, but an ice-bolt seemed to pass through his heart. Hurrying into the underground chamber where stood the padlocked chest, he knocked thrice upon the lid. The first knock was answered by a rustling sound, the second by a sigh, the third by a hollow groan. Slowly the lid arose, and with averted eyes, the wizard listened for counsel from within.

"Beware of the tree of doom!" were the words distinctly spoken, after which the lid closed as it had opened, creaking on rusty hinges.

"The tree of doom?" repeated the wizard, a cold sweat breaking out upon his forehead. While he yet

marvelled there was heard a commotion in the halls above ; and, on issuing from his retreat, Soulis was informed that Walter Branxholme, brother of his prisoner, and a peerless bowman, had rallied a strong force of Teviotdale men and was straightway coming to the rescue of the prisoners.

Soulis thought of his slender garrison, and for the first time a pang of fear assailed him. Again would he take counsel of the uncanny powers who, until now, had never failed their devotee. Returning to the warlock's chamber, he knocked again upon the chest, but this time, in his eagerness, he forgot to turn away his eyes, gazing within as the lid arose. What he beheld there no one knows, but he heard a voice cry out in sullen anger :

"Since thou hast dared to look upon me, Soulis, the link that binds us two is broken, and my protection is withdrawn. Get thee hence speedily, locking after thee the chamber door ; and cast away the key that none may find it. Seven years hence the chamber door may open again, but do thou return no more."

Soulis knew better than to disobey. Slowly and with bitter reluctance, he locked up the warlock chamber, casting away the keys where none might find them. With rage kindling his heart, he determined to kill the heir of Branxholme, before his brother's army could arrive.

"What would you do with me, Branxholme, if you had me where I have you ?" was the question he put to his brave young prisoner.

"I should lead you out into the greenwood, and let your own hand pick out the tree for you to hang upon," was the disdainful answer.

"So let it be with you, my haughty youngster," an-

swered the wizard ; " with your own hand you may pick out a tree to hang upon, and should the lady May persist in refusing to marry me, she shall have the choice of another by your side."

Out into the greenwood, passing between ranks of stately pine-trees, in whose topmost branches sounded the cry of the hungry carrion crow, they led young Branxholme, asking tauntingly if it were his choice " upon the tapering pine to feed the hooded crow."

" When the night wind blows around Branxholme towers," the youth replied, " it bows the head of trees like these; and I would not die upon the pine that I have loved from childhood."

They led him farther, to where the leaves of the silver aspen rustled mournfully, asking if the gay gallant were ready to make his choice.

" Not this of all trees," cried the youth. " More dear to me is the aspen than any other, since underneath its varying shade did I and my love exchange our vows."

All the time they were moving from tree to tree, young Branxholme kept his keen eyes fixed on the undergrowth of the forest dell, hoping to catch behind its leafy ambush a glimpse of the sight he longed to see. Nor was he disappointed, since soon the gleam of steel in lurking met his gaze, and he saw ahead of him a band of his own men, each wearing a sprig of witch-hazel in his cap and holding a bow in hand.

" Make haste and choose thy tree, or I shall string thee up to the one nearest at hand," cried Soulis, impatiently.

" Yonder, ahead of me, I spy the *tree of doom!*" shouted Branxholme in a loud clear voice. Taking this for a signal, his men rushed out, and surrounded

the inferior force of Soulis, waking the silence of the glen with their cheers.

"A fig for your tree of doom," called out the captive wizard, struggling beneath the lances. "Find me the hand in Scotland fair, that has yet set the print of a wound upon me, and I'll submit, my lords of Teviotdale!"

"Now, by my sooth!" cried out bold Walter, leader of the band, "if your saying be true, Lord Soulis, we shall soon prove it." And drawing his bent bow he sent an arrow straight at the heart of the sorcerer, who received the dart unflinchingly, afterward showing his breast unharmed. At this a shudder ran through the ranks of Teviot men, who insisted aloud that the wizard should be burnt upon the spot.

"Tarry a while," counselled a knight called Thomas of Ersyltoun. "It is but fair to inform our prisoner that since his last outrage against the King's most sacred person, in the murder of his messenger, not to speak of the abduction of the Lady May and the capture of young Branxholme, King James has bidden us deal with you as we see fit, Soulis of Liddesdale. Therefore, prepare to die a sorcerer's death!"

At a sign, the still defiant Soulis, borne down to earth beneath a score of gleaming lances, was bound hand and foot with new hempen bands, which he burst as easily as if they had been a cobweb. A second time they bound him with shackles of new forged steel, and these he snapt with as little effort as the first. Then Thomas of Ersyltoun, taking from his breast a little black book of magic (rescued from the coffin of the famous necromancer, Michael Scott, who had vowed it should be buried with his bones), sought in its pages for a spell wherewith to hold their prisoner.

"Fetch sand from the Nine-Stone-Brook;" he proclaimed, at length, with an air of great relief, and when his followers obeyed, he ordered them to sift the sand, and form it into ropes.

Spite of their cunning workmanship the ropes would not hold together, and indeed, why should they, when there, unseen by the vengeful Teviot men, lurked sly Redcap, undoing the task as fast as they accomplished it. Then had true Thomas of Ersyltoun recourse once more to his little black book, in whose pages he learned that to form the ropes desired they must add barley chaff to the sifted sand.

Thus, at last, the work was done, and the invincible wizard lay bound and motionless at the mercy of his judges. Even Redcap fled away from him, as the rats desert a falling house. The Teviot men, who had a long score to settle with their prisoner, condemned him upon the spot to a most painful death, the particulars of which form one of the darkest chapters of border warfare.

What you will care more to hear about is the happy release of May of Goranberry by her true lover's hand, and of their wedding, shortly afterward, when Branxholme and his bride rode under the aspen's shade to——

"No, you very much mistake," interrupted the little boy. "I never did see much fun in weddings, though they have them as *sure as anything* at the end of all the stories! And I want Soulis to be punished as he deserved. I can't think of anything bad enough—couldn't you just tell me all about it?" he added in a coaxing tone.

But the hunting-horn, complaining of a sore throat

after his unusual eloquence, subsided into quiet, and Regi was left to ponder and to wonder, at his leisure, over the fate of cruel Soulis.

He determined to remember every word of the Scotch stories to tell Fred. Even Fred, who was allowed to read novels and newspapers, must be interested in these.

THE ITALIAN HARP'S STORY.

"I WANT to hear from you," the little boy remarked the next to the last afternoon in the swiftly waning holidays. "And yet, somehow, I don't."

His conversation was addressed to an old Italian harp, of which mention has been already made. It was a beautiful little instrument, of highly polished wood, in the natural tint of golden brown, painted with loves and doves, and hearts and crooks and roses in abundance, and of a shape quite out of the common. Regi had been in the habit of seeing visitors pause before it, to be told of some fabulously early date at which its maker was supposed to have lived in Florence, and he had conceived an idea that if the harp spoke to him, it would be about antiquities which he should be dreadfully puzzled to understand.

"As you please, my young friend," answered the harp, in a musical murmur. "When one reaches my time of life, a century or two more or less of silence can make little difference. But when one has been the daily companion—the mouth-piece, I may say—of a beautiful countess who was crossed in love, it is perhaps a lack of dignity to descend to less aristocratic converse," and a sigh followed.

"There you go!" exclaimed Regi in a tone verging on despair. "Crossed in love! I knew it was coming in somewhere. It's worse than the descriptions. I'll

just tell you the real truth why I didn't want to hear from Italy, and that is because I was sure it would be about monuments and statues and love—nothing to make a fellow laugh, or to make him feel creepy and crawly, or else ready to fight like Keeldar! I don't suppose you understand very well what I mean, it has been so long since you were little—young, that is,—now hasn't it?"

"Not so long but that I remember some pleasant tales once told around me," answered the harp, amiably repressing any slight vexation she might have experienced at this unceremonious piece of dictation from her youthful auditor. "If it were only to teach you not to judge everything from the outside, I should like to try to win a laugh from you, instead of a sigh. Methinks there have been woful tales in plenty, of late. Let me then give you a sample of my skill in merry ones."

An honorable gentleman was Currado Gianfiliazzi, whose great delight was in hunting with hounds and hawks. Upon one of these expeditions, his hawk having secured for him a fat young crane of a rare kind, he sent the prize home to his cook with orders to prepare it for supper. Now this cook, Chichibio by name, was a simple-witted Venetian, easily hoodwinked by any one who set about the business; and he was for the time being wofully in love with a pretty lass, named Brunetta, employed as a maid about his master's house. When Chichibio had picked, trussed and spitted his bird, and put it to roast before the fire, the smell arose in appetizing fragrance on the air.

"How good roast crane must be!" exclaimed Bru-

netta, passing at this moment through the kitchen. "If you really loved me, as you say you do, I should have a taste of this dainty."

"Beautiful Brunetta!" cried the cook, rolling his great eyes like a calf's, "ask me anything else—an almond pasty, or a dish of macaroni, and it shall be at the service of your cherry lips. But this crane, the first of the season, prepared especially for my master's table, 'twould be as much as my place is worth to cut a tiny slice from it!"

"Then I shall certainly refuse to dance with you at the next festival," answered the damsel, pouting; "and as for taking you for my sweetheart, I'll go farther to find a bolder one!"

Chichibio's knees trembled and a cold perspiration broke out on his forehead, in spite of the burning heat. What! lose his partner for the dance! Give up the hardly-earned favor of Brunetta on account of a paltry bird that comes out of a marsh. Never!

So taking out his sharpest carving knife, he studied the bird's anatomy with a knowing air—deciding finally to cut off one leg and, doing as little damage as possible, conceal the loss with a grove of water cresses, skilfully disposed. Useless to say that the gallant cook was fully repaid for his manœuvre by viewing the enjoyment with which his fair one, seated against a background of pots and kettles, gnawed at the juicy member until only the bones were left; then, bestowing upon her admirer an approving kiss, Brunetta ran off about her business.

The supper was served, and in due time the crane came on the table, between Currado and a friend he had invited home to share his meal. So savory was the smell, that the two agreed to divide it equally, and

all went well, till it came to the missing leg. "How's this?" cried Currado, "who has had the impertinence to taste of this tid-bit before me? It must be that rascal of a cook. Send for him at once, and let me settle him with a drubbing."

Chichibio was dragged into the dining-room forthwith, more dead than alive, for he knew his master to be a man of his word, and feared a whipping heartily."

"What has become of the other leg of my crane, you varlet?" asked Currado fiercely.

"Please your worship," stammered the terrified cook, determined not to betray his dear Brunetta, "a crane, it is well known, has but one leg."

"Only one leg. Nonsense. Do you think I never before saw a crane?"

"All the same, sir," persisted Chichibio, "what I say is true, and I can prove it to you, whenever you please, by the living birds."

"Very well, then," said the master, who did not choose to amuse his guest by further discussion with his servant.

Next morning early, however, he had Chichibio hauled out of bed and conducted to the neighboring river-side, where before sunrise it was sometimes possible to find a common sort of cranes; and there the trembling cook pointed out, exultingly, several of the creatures, each standing motionless upon one leg only.

"Now, sir, you may judge for yourself," said Chichibio, scarcely daring to believe his own good fortune. "As I said, no crane has more than one leg."

At this Currado, tempted to burst out laughing, restrained himself and gravely answered.

"Yes, but I shall show you that they have two."

"'Now, Sir, you may judge for yourself,' said Chichilio."

Then, riding up to them, he cried out aloud "Shoo! Shoo!" at which every crane quickly dropped his other leg and, taking a step or two, flew off across the water.

"Well, thou lying knave, art satisfied?" asked Currado of his cook.

Chichibio, not knowing exactly whether he were upon his head or his heels, answered, "Yes, my lord, I grant what you say is just. But, if you had taken the trouble to shout 'shoo! shoo!' at that crane last night, he would no doubt have put down his other leg, as these have done."

The cook's wit pleased his master so well as to drive all thoughts of anger from his mind. Laughing heartily, Currado let the poor fellow go in peace.

"Ha! ha!" shouted the little boy. "That's a jolly one. Can you tell another like it, Miss Harp?"

"I shall try," answered the amiable spinster. "The next is about a countrywoman of mine, a widow called Masella, who had six daughters of uncertain age, all tall as hop-stakes, who scolded from morn to eve, and a goose of a son named Antony."

"It begins well," said the little boy, piling behind his back a number of down cushions and stretching out his legs, till he looked like an Eastern sovereign. "Lie still, Bran! I'm ready now. Go on."

When the six daughters had quarrelled with each other until they were tired, all united in scolding Antony, and his mother chimed in, till the wretched lad felt as if he had rather live in a mill with a dozen

wheels going around him at once. One day, when things looked especially gloomy at home, he made up his mind to run away. No sooner thought of than done. Anthony ran as fast as his legs would go, down the long dusty road, across the plains and up into a lonely mountain region, where he hid under a rock until the moon came up. Then, hunger assailing him, he looked about for the light of some peasant dwelling where he might beg for food. Half way up the steep hillside he caught a faint twinkle, and, on climbing in that direction, saw that it came from a little green house made of turf, built under the shelter of a cliff. Walking around and around the little green house, he spied an iron plate with an iron knocker and, mustering up his courage, knocked on this. At once a roaring sound was heard within, like lions.

"I don't care," said Antony, "I'm used to noise at home," and he knocked again.

This time there was a hissing sound, like serpents.

"Who cares," said Antony, and he knocked again.

This time the rattling and the hissing and the roaring and the groaning inside were something terrible. But Antony calmly knocked again.

And now the noise stopped, the iron plate flew back, and out of the aperture peered the face of a blood-red dwarf, who harshly bade the boy begone.

"I cannot walk another step, no matter how you order me," said Antony. "I am a poor boy who wants food and shelter, and who would not go back home for anything, since our house is as bad all the time as yours seemed to be just now."

"What can you do?" asked the dwarf, suspiciously.

"Oh! almost anything," said Antony, in a cheerful way.

"Could you turn the spit, and sweep the house out, think you?" asked the dwarf.

"Yes," said Antony. "But look here! If you've got a wife or any sisters or mothers in there, I'd rather work outside, if it's all the same to you."

"Come in, I like your principles," said the blood-red dwarf; and at that, a door concealed in the turf wall sprang open, and Antony saw his new master standing in a very bow-legged kind of a way on the threshold. The house inside was as neat as a new pin; a little bed, a little table, a little stool, a little pot boiling over the fire, and not a sign of lions or serpents or wild animals of any kind about.

"I made all that noise myself," the dwarf said, seeing Antony's curiosity. "I always do it when anybody calls. It saves going to the door. Now, I like you for various reasons; and you may stay a year, if you like. Exactly a year, neither more nor less. Serve me well, and you'll get a present worth having, to take away with you."

"This looks nice," said Antony, warming his hands, and casting longing looks into the pot, where he saw a fowl stewing with vegetables. "But you are sure the women folk won't mind? They'll be coming in, I take it, pretty soon."

"One of my rules is that you are not to mention the word woman while in my house," cried the dwarf, looking fearfully angry; and on this Antony clapped his hands for joy. Everything was exactly to his taste.

He lived with the dwarf till that day year, and had no fault to find with his master excepting his queer complexion. He hoped the dwarf had forgotten the limit fixed for his stay, but no! when the day came, his master took him to the iron door, and put him out.

"Good-bye," said the blood-red dwarf. "You're a decent fellow, if not a very wise one. Take that donkey tethered on the hill-side, and drive him to your home. But on no account say 'Out with it, Neddy,' before you get there."

The turf door closed, and Antony did as he was bidden. When he stopped to rest on the border of a village, he could not help wondering about the dwarf's advice.

"I don't see why I can't say it. It is nothing much to say, anyway! It couldn't possibly do any harm for me to say 'Out with it, Neddy.'"

The words were said; and, on hearing them, the donkey opened his mouth and dropped upon the roadside a handful of pearls and rubies as big as walnuts!

Antony picked these up with a bewildered air, and sat there scratching his head in astonishment for a full half-hour. Then, putting the jewels in his pocket, he walked boldly to the principal tavern of the place, asking for supper and a bed, with stabling for his beast.

After supper, the host, who was a cunning fellow, fell into conversation with his good-natured guest, asking him where he had been, and what was the strangest thing he had seen upon his travels.

"As to your first question," quoth Antony, "I've been to Paradise—since no womankind are there. As to your second, don't ask me when or how, but I've seen a donkey throw up pearls and rubies, if you think that's a strange sight."

The host roared with laughter, believing the mild-mannered stranger to have escaped from some lunatic asylum. But Antony, who felt aggrieved at being laughed at, took out of his pocket a loose handful of jewels, and spread them on the table.

The innkeeper's eyes danced in his head with covetous delight.

"Mind, I didn't tell what donkey I got them from," Antony went on, pleased at the impression he produced. "And whatever you do, don't go into my donkey's stall and say 'Out with it, Neddy.'"

"Not I!" cried the host; but when the simpleton was fast asleep, the cunning innkeeper crept out with a lantern to the stable and, stroking Antony's donkey on the neck, said "Out with it, Neddy." Out came a shower of pearls and rubies, each as big as a walnut, and the innkeeper, grabbing them eagerly, hastened to lead Neddy into his own private stable, putting in his place a common donkey from the green greatly resembling him.

Next morning, Antony went on his way, stopping to sell his pearls and rubies to a silversmith, who gave him for them only a handful of silver pennies, which he took, thinking himself well paid.

When he reached home he found the cross mother and the giraffe sisters quite the same; they began scolding him before he was fairly in the house.

"Never mind," he said, "I've had a year of peace at any rate, and when you see the wonder I have brought home, you'll die of joy."

This excited their curiosity, and the six tall sisters surrounded him eagerly, actually getting him food and drink before he asked for it. Then Antony led his donkey out, and bidding them watch well for the great sight they would witness, cried in a brisk and confident voice, "Out with it, Neddy!"

As may be readily imagined, nothing followed this invocation, except that the innkeeper's donkey opened his mouth and uttered a long and melancholy bray.

Again and again Antony tried, but with the same success. At last, his mother and sisters, believing he had played a trick on them, fell upon the poor lad and drubbed him soundly, seizing upon the donkey to carry their linen to and from the wash.

Antony stood his miserable life at home as long as possible, and then the thought came into his head to go to his old master, begging to be taken back. So one rainy night he ran off and, covered with mud and mire, made his appearance next day before the little green house on the hill-side. Knocking three times, he heard the terrible noises with which he was so familiar, and at length the blood-red dwarf thrust his head out of the aperture as before.

"Take me back, master," cried Antony. "A dog's life have I led down yonder among those women, and they've taken away my donkey in the bargain."

Asking no questions, the dwarf bade him enter, and gave him food and clothes, engaging him to be his servant for another year. At the end of that time Antony was bundled out; and on this occasion the dwarf gave him a table-cloth of ordinary damask, charging him by no means to say "Cloth, be covered!" until he reached his home.

Antony sat down under the shade of a tree beside a running rivulet, after he had walked the better part of a summer's day, and, just to amuse himself, pulled the cloth out of his pocket, unfolding it upon the grass.

"I'm not going to be such a fool this time, as I was the last," he said. "What a silly fellow I should be, to lose all my luck, only for the pleasure of saying 'Cloth, be covered!'"

Before the words had popped out of his mouth, Antony saw before him a most delicious luncheon of

smoking-hot dishes, with a bottle of sparkling wine! Well, what was done could not be undone now; and, falling to, he ate heartily, till every dish was cleared! Then, folding up his cherished cloth, he journeyed on, stopping at nightfall at the inn where he had slept the year before.

"How do you do, my good friend?" said the crafty landlord, giving him a hearty welcome and the best bedroom in the house. "Order what you will for supper, and it shall be served to you."

Antony could not understand the reason for such extraordinary civility, but thanked the innkeeper, telling him he should like to go to bed without eating. "For to tell you the truth I ate such a meal to-day as I never ate before."

"And what other tavern did you favor with your company, sir?" asked the host.

"As to that, I had better say nothing. But before I rest there's a service you can do me. I have a trifle here that I want you to take care of. It's only a table-cloth, but thieves are often found where one least expects them, and it is better to be on the safe side."

"A table-cloth!" said the landlord stretching his eyes. "That's very odd, now, isn't it?"

"Not half so odd, as what happens when you call out, 'Cloth, be covered,' whispered simple Antony. "Only, I know I can trust you to do nothing of the kind."

No sooner had Antony's head touched the pillow than he was snoring; and the host, going off with the table-cloth, locked himself in a private room, crying out "Cloth, be covered."

A splendid supper appeared in the twinkling of an eye, and the dishonest landlord, after eating and drinking

his fill, hunted up a table-cover resembling Antony's, which in the morning he presented to the simpleton as his own. The dwarf's table-cloth remained under lock and key in the landlord's private room.

When Antony reached home, he felt certain of success with his new acquisition ; and his mother and sisters allowed themselves to be persuaded that this time they were to receive a rare and costly treat. Judge of the blows and thumps that fell to the poor fellow's lot when they were disappointed ! Some time afterwards he ran away again, returning to the dwarf, and beseeching him to take him back.

"Once more, I shall try thee," said the blood-red dwarf. "But after this year, come not back again, as it is against the rule for us to hire a mortal more than three years running."

At the end of the time Antony went off, weeping to part with his good master, who at the last moment put into his hand a stout cudgel.

"Now, on no account, until you cross the threshold of your home, say, 'Up, stick ! down, stick !'" cautioned the dwarf.

Antony, swinging the cudgel in the air, trudged home, feeling very melancholy. Hungry and tired, since he paused not by the way, he reached the inn of the dishonest landlord.

"How do you do, my best of friends ?" was again his greeting. This time, the landlord gave him up his own bed, a nice hot supper, wine, a bath, and all the comforts. When Antony was about to go to bed, the landlord pressed his hand.

"Is there nothing more I can do for you, dear friend ?" he asked. "Nothing that I can take care of, and guard from thieves, as I did before ?"

"'Well, perhaps you may keep this cudgel for me,' answered sleepy Antony."

"Well, perhaps you may keep this cudgel for me," answered sleepy Antony. "Somebody might want to steal it, and then where should I be? It's the last present I'm to get from my kind old master; and whatever you do," he added, in a whisper, "let no one say before it, 'Up, stick! down, stick' until I get it safely home."

The landlord promised that all should be as he wished, and Anthony, turning over, fell asleep. In the middle of the night, the landlord, going into his private room, heaped with the riches he had obtained from Anthony's donkey (for the innkeeper was a miserly fellow, and had parted with none of them), took out the cudgel and cried aloud, "Up, stick! down, stick! and this time do your best, whatever it may be."

At that, the cudgel rose up in the air, descending whack! on the landlord's shoulders. Again and again it pummelled him, until, roaring for mercy, he cried, "Stop, stick!" "Don't, stick!" "Please, stick!" "Oh! stick," and everything he could think of, but in vain. The stick went on pounding, till his howls aroused the whole household, and Antony among them. As soon as the host saw Antony, he ordered the others to go out, and, beseeching the young man's pardon, confessed his thefts of donkey, cloth and cudgel.

"Will you promise to give up all my property, if I let you off?" said Antony, thinking himself very grand indeed to have a landlord begging his pardon.

"All! Every bit of it. Take the stick first!" shouted the host, who was still dancing a jig to the tune of a stout oak cudgel. So, as Antony thought he had been well punished, he stretched out his hand to take the stick, when it immediately stopped work of its own accord and stood itself up in a corner very quietly.

Antony arrived at home riding upon his donkey

and carrying his cloth and cudgel. The stolen treasure came after him in a covered wagon belonging to the landlord, who went to bed covered with vinegar and brown paper, to stay there for a week. When the mother and the six cross sisters saw who it was approaching their house, they ran out to meet Antony, scolding more furiously than ever, till the poor youth had to put his fingers in his ears before he could venture to speak at all.

"Now look out, all of you," he said, mildly. "This time I have really brought home a fortune, and if you treat me well you shall not regret it."

"Off with you, oaf, dolt, booby!" (and a great many harder names), they began to shout in chorus, till at last Antony, in despair, said:

"I wonder what my cudgel would do if I should cry, 'Up, stick! down, stick!'"

The cudgel answered for itself by bouncing with surprising agility into the middle of the group of shrews. Taking one after another in turn till it got to the last, and then going back again to begin over again, it contrived to give these scolding women all the blows they had ever bestowed on Antony, with liberal interest!

As for our simpleton, when it was known that he was rich, he soon came to be considered one of the wise men of his day.

REGI'S OWN STORY.

WHAT with the pleasure of Fred's company in the day time, and of listening to stories in the late afternoon, Regi had never known days fly so fast as those of this Christmas holiday. He had been in a trance of quiet satisfaction; and when, from time to time, the thought had popped into his mind that such a state of things must of necessity be soon cut short, he tried to put it away from him, and was seen to stop and shake his head violently from side to side, as if by that means he could rid himself of the uncomfortable reminder.

But no! There the hateful thing stuck, as if it had taken root. Finally, to comfort himself, the little boy appealed to his brother while sitting over against that luxurious young idler at his tardy breakfast a few mornings after New Year. Regi watched Fred sprinkle cayenne pepper on his omelette, and make coffee for himself in a mysterious apparatus standing at his elbow on the table, before he ventured to put the question that made his poor little heart go pit-a-pat.

"Are you going back to college very soon, Fred?" he asked in a tremulous voice.

"Rather soon, old fellow," was the answer. "But not till I've had a few days of ice-boating with Sharpless, at his place on the Hudson, where we go to-morrow."

"To-morrow, Fred?" repeated the child, his lip

quivering, despite a manful determination not to show his weakness.

"Yes, to-morrow, and a capital look-out we have for sport. This tremendous cold weather of late will give us a fair field upon the river. Think of us, Regi! Perched on a triangular platform rigged with strong skating irons, and propelled by huge sails, we'll go scudding over the ice at the rate of sixty or seventy miles an hour, if the wind is strong enough. There's speed for you. It's as good as being an eagle; don't you think so?"

Wisely determining that the best way to deal with the impending sorrow was to divert it, Fred hurried from description to description of the exciting Northern pastime until he had the relief of seeing the child's eyes clear again, and bright as the sparkle of a wintry star. During the rest of the day, at every chance Regi had, he haunted his brother's footsteps, rubbing against him like a friendly cat, waiting on him with joyful alacrity, and gazing up at him with a look the elder found it hard to meet unmoved.

"By Jove, it's more than I can stand not to tell the boy the surprise my father has in store for him. He's taking this matter of my going off so hard, I don't believe I'd have the pluck to desert if there were not a substitute at hand. Poor little man! With a disposition like that, he ought to grow up neck-to-neck with a half-dozen brothers and sisters, or else be sent to boarding-school. I wonder how he'll greet the coming change in the management? If things are as I remember them, we shall all be the better for it."

So meditated Fred, while wrapping himself up in a fur-lined coat to go with his father for a final sleigh-

ride. Regi dearly loved to be included in these expeditions, where, tucked between them under the wolf-skins, he gazed out at the snow-bound landscape and a road hard as ice under the beat of many hoofs, along which sped a bewildering number of sleighs drawn by spirited horses amid a carnival of merry bells. But to-day his father meant to drive to a greater distance than usual, and the little boy was left behind. When he had watched them shoot off from the door, the bay trotters prancing with excitement in the frosty atmosphere, Regi went up-stairs in search of Rosa. He found that good-humored personage busied in dusting and putting to rights a large spare bedroom ; and by experience Regi knew that when Rosa was absorbed in the professional interest of patting pillows and smoothing coverlets he could elicit from her little that was connected in the way of conversation. For the want of something better to do, he hung a rack with large fringed towels, and then it occurred to him to speculate as to why this long-vacant chamber was put in readiness.

"I s'pose it's Uncle Nathaniel," he said to himself, in a discontented way. It must have been a very difficult person indeed with whom Regi could not put himself into sociable relations ; but Uncle Nathaniel did not favor little boys. He was a very thin old gentleman, with a skin like parchment, and jaws that worked with a click whilst he was eating. That was one reason Regi had for not fancying him ; and another was that he hemmed and hawed and frowned and peered about him when he came into the room, as if searching for an offender. Regi thought this habit was the natural consequence of Uncle Nathaniel's having been a judge ; and he felt uncomfortable until the old gentle-

man had betaken himself back to Philadelphia, whence he was wont to come on periodical visits to his nephew Standish.

While Regi was reviewing these pictures of his great-uncle, he heard a noise of men carrying something in the entry-way; and, thereupon, the door flew open to admit a little new brass bedstead, with mattress and pillow like his own. At sight of them Rosa turned round in a pet and, scolding the grinning carmen for "bloonderin' craythurs, to coom before a body was expectin' them," gently whisked Regi out of the room, and closed the door in his face. Here was mystery! For whom could the little new bed be intended? Surely Uncle Nathaniel had not yet reached his second childhood!

Full of curiosity, Regi visited the laundry and the kitchen, asking questions of the maids, to be put off by one and all with evasions, winding up at last in the butler's pantry, where his friend Thomas was busy polishing the plate. But Tom, usually the most communicative of mortals, was as baffling as the others; and so was Barnes, coming in to sharply bid his subordinate "hurry up an' do his shinin', and git about them winders." Barnes, off duty, was quite a different personage from Barnes in evening dress behind his master's chair, and he often relapsed into homely forms of speech; but we must pardon him, since even the great need their moments of relaxation.

Well! Clearly there was nothing for Regi, but to take refuge in the drawing-room, where he had passed so many pleasant hours of late, journeying away on the wings of fancy across the ocean, without fear of seasickness, and going from land to land as quickly as if he were mounted on Joodar's magic mule.

Poor boy, he wanted to make his cake last as long as possible, and after to-day, closing as it soon would in Twelfth Night, he knew that his kind story-tellers must go back again into the silence of inanimate things. On approaching the room, he became conscious that a ripple of talk was going on among them and, drawing the folds of a portière around him, he stood listening quietly.

"Yes! everybody has done well!" he heard the cuckoo say, importantly. "The astonishing part is that these stories show how much has been going on outside of my country."

"If, when you stepped out of your house, you had listened more and done less talking, perhaps you would not have waited until now to find that out," retorted the bull-fighter's sword.

"The Cuckoo is quite right," condescendingly observed the French fan; "I, also, am willing to admit that these recitals of the doings of the lower classes have been interesting. Though, as to that, parole d'honneur, anything for a change from such monotony as ours. I am surprised that these Americans have none of the fêtes peculiar to the celebration of the day. I remember how gay "le jour des rois," as we call Twelfth Night in France, used to be. Once, my mistress, holding me in one hand, and a scent-bottle in the other, that the atmosphere of bourgeoisie might not overpower her, looked on at a merry-making given by her servants, called by them "The dinner of the kings." They sat, in their best clothes, around a crescent-shaped table, at the broadest part of which were stationed two raised arm-chairs. A huge cake was cut and distributed, and he who found the bean baked in it was loudly hailed the king. The finder of the bean, had

the right to choose his own queen, and was escorted in honor to the throne. Next, the king was called on to order wine for the whole company and, holding a full bumper in his hand, walked around the table clinking glasses with the men, and saluting the women with kisses on the brow. This ceremony over, he returned to his place as master of the revels, which lasted late into the night. Whenever the king drank, or the queen sipped her wine, everybody at the table had to cry out, on pain of paying a forfeit, "The king drinks." "The queen has drank—" which kept up a fine clattering of tongues, one may imagine."

"What was that for?" cried Regi, unable to resist joining in the conversation.

The fan executed a delicate shiver, as if to signify that no high-bred personage can endure abruptness unrebuked.

"You are incorrigible, child, in point of manners. However, I will inform you that the Twelfth Night ceremonies I have described were an old French custom supposed to be in honor of the three kings of the Orient, who carried offerings to the infant Jesus in his manger."

"I could tell your ladyship and our little friend here many a jolly tale of our English festivals on Twelfth Night," remarked the oaken settle, with a tinge of true British reverence to aristocracy in his hearty voice.

"And I, of like observances in Germany," said the châtelaine. "Though, as in the case of madame la Marquise, I took note of them only from afar."

"And I, in Spain," said the Moorish dish.

"No doubt, all Christian countries unite in honoring the feast of the Epiphany," said the settle. "But in England, the Twelfth Night sports were common to all

classes of society, from royalty down. We had mummers and masks going about from castle to country-house, dressed to represent the Magi; the oldest, a man with a long white beard, had gold in his hand, and was called Melchior; the second, a beardless boy named Jasper, bore frankincense; while Balthasar, wearing a huge black beard, carried myrrh. Money for the poor was given to these characters; and afterwards the company who had received them mixed and drank a mighty bowl of wassail—hot spiced ale, full of sugar, nutmeg, and ginger, with roasted apples bobbing about in it. A cake was cut, containing a bean or a ring, and whoever got the prize wore a crown during the remainder of the feast. The only feature of Twelfth Night that nobody enjoyed was the waking up, on the morning following. All realized that Christmas fun was over, and that hard work had begun again."

"I'll soon know how that feels," said Regi, fetching a deep and heart-felt sigh. "I haven't felt lonely a bit, these holidays; and when I've gone to bed at night, I've laid awake trying to remember the beautiful stories you have all told me, till the world was bigger and broader somehow, and I seemed to have friends everywhere. Yes, it has been a happy Christmas, but now it must end. I wonder if I mayn't ask *you* for my last story," he concluded, addressing himself to a photograph set in a pretty French frame of glittering Rhine stones, one of those trifles meant to deck the boudoir of beauty in idleness. Regi knew this had been a bit of his mamma's property, but no one had ever told him who was the original of the fair face he now gazed at admiringly. For years past, he had been accustomed to look into the wide-open eyes of the lady of this picture, but, child-like, he took

its presence in the house for granted without investigation. And yet, as his awakening faculties made him more observant, Regi fancied there was an expression familiar to him in the lady's eyes, and playing around her clear-cut lips—though no one he knew had those beautiful braids of hair, wreathed over a small, proud head, or the soft curves of cheek and chin, or the tall, lithe figure, wearing so gracefully the robes of lace and satin.

"I suppose, to look at me, you would expect something very bright and gay. A story of the primrose paths of life, in short. But really, my young friend, you could not have made a worse selection. My experience has been both limited and unsatisfactory. Everywhere I went, I set out in high hope; but success never attended me. However, since you ask me, I must speak, if I can do nothing more than draw for you the outline of a sketch."

"But you look as if trouble had never come near you," exclaimed the boy.

"Appearances are altogether against me," sighed the photograph, "as you will soon discover, if you have patience to hear my tale."

Eight years ago, in a poor room of a cheap neighborhood in Paris, a lady was gazing down from time to time, with proud and loving glances, upon a little bundle of lace and flannel that lay across her knees. There she sat, looking pale and wan in the flicker of a tiny coal-fire that sent jets of flame into the twilight, and when something within the bundle stirred now and again, she soothed it, murmuring more fond, foolish words than I should dare to tell you. From my post upon the

mantel-piece I looked at her, and she looked back at me.

"Laugh at me, if you choose, you silly thing," she cried, on one occasion when we exchanged a survey. "Round and rosy, and prosperous you may have been, with your fine gown and your jewelled necklace, dressed for a court ball, and wonderfully conscious of your looks, madam ; but you had no such treasure as this I hold in my thin arms to-night, to boast of!"

You begin to suspect the truth, Regi, that I was a portrait of the lady herself, taken a few years before, at the height of her girlish beauty.

I remember the day when I came into existence, facing her as she stood before the camera of a French photographer, who presently held me up to his assistants as a beauty of the rarest "type Américain." She, too, expressed herself delighted with me, in her frank, impulsive way, when, a few days later, she brought the frame I still wear, to enclose me in.

"I've been hunting the shops to find the prettiest one," she exclaimed. "For this, monsieur, is a present to my husband, and you must on no account delay sending it this evening."

"An anniversary, a fête, no doubt?" the man said, bowing himself double with the assurance that he should not, could not allow madame to be disappointed.

I was sent home that night and put upon the dinner-table, hidden beneath a napkin covered by a mass of blue forget-me-nots. She sat opposite, behind a basket of more forget-me-nots, and her face was radiant. When the time came for a man's hand to lift me from my hiding-place, and to turn me to the full light with an exclamation of surprise, I heard her laugh—the merriest ringing peal! I think I can hear it now.

We travelled about a great deal after that, and at first I was always carried in a man's dressing-case, and set up among combs and brushes and ivory things, in a way I did not particularly fancy. Once I was forgotten in the packing up, and they had to telegraph for me to be sent after them. Gradually I grew dusty, and one day, my double, crying softly, came into the room, and, wrapping me in white tissue paper, put me in the bottom of a stuffy trunk in the folds of an India shawl, where for weeks, nay months, I smothered—no one remarking that I had disappeared.

On the occasion I have described to you, when the lady sat nursing her child upon her knee, she had been going over the contents of the box where I was immured, to find an old packet of letters ; and, taking me out at the same time with the object of her search, she set me in an excellent position to observe everything that followed.

I own I was astonished to see that baby. I had not the least idea of such a thing being in existence, and I could not share her interest in him. He was fortunately fast asleep when, with a final kiss, she laid him in the cradle and lit a candle to turn over the letters.

By the yellow look of these papers, and from their crackling sound, it was easy to see that they belonged to years gone by. Her tears dropped fast over more than one of them, and at last, she read aloud a passage that seemed deeply to impress her.

"He was always a reserved boy, and one difficult to deal with, but he had deep affections. When I came into the nursery that night, and found he had himself taken his crying baby sister from the crib, and had hushed her to sleep with fond caresses, I felt that I might safely trust her to his care through life—as I

now do, my child, beseeching you, for your mother's sake, to love one another always, as she loves you."

When she had finished reading, the lady gave a sob, and, running over to the sleeping child, kissed it wildly. The letter was written by her dead mother, and between the brother it described, and the baby sister now grown to be a woman with a baby of her own, a great coldness had sprung up, until they were like strangers.

"For my darling's sake, I shall put away pride and write to my brother," the poor thing said when she had done crying. "I shall ask him to be friends with me again; and I shall send this picture, for I could not bear to have him see me as I now am, or to know that we are poor."

Scribbling hastily, she dashed off a long letter; and the clock beside me had struck midnight before she signed her name. Then, taking me from my place, she wrapped me in a parcel with the letter, and sealed and addressed it. That was, necessarily, the last time I saw my double, since the next day I was tossed into a mail-bag, to occupy, for a week or two, most uncomfortable quarters in the hold of a ship that never let me rest in peace, with its rolling and pitching, until we reached America, and I was unfolded by the people who received me.

"What sort of a man was her husband?" asked Regi. "And what became of the baby? Was her brother glad to get the picture? And how did you come to be here?"

"Stop! stop," said the photograph. "Some things I may tell you, but not everything. What I knew of

the husband in the days when I belonged to him, was not so agreeable that I regretted to be sent away from him altogether. But she was one of those loving souls who see people as they want to see them, not as they are. I never heard how things went with her after we parted ; nor have I heard of the baby. You see I told you the truth ! mine is not much of a story."

"You haven't answered my question. How came you to belong to us ?" the boy asked again. At that very moment the door opened, and in came Fred followed by his papa, bringing with them a whiff of keen cold air; and Fred was so full of the exhilaration of his drive that Regi had no time to resent the unsatisfactory conclusion of his story, or even to reflect ruefully that he had heard the last of his merry Christmas budget. But odd things had not yet done happening in little Regi's home, as you will see.

"You may sit up to-night, Regi, since it is Fred's last evening," said his father, at dessert. Regi's cheeks glowed with pleasure. In a burst of gratitude, he burrowed under his father's arm after a fashion all his own, his tumbled head emerging on a level with the breast-pocket. Involuntarily, Mr. Standish tightened his grasp around the boy.

"You'll be lonely after Fred goes, won't you, my lad ?" he said, kissing him. "And what will you do when I tell you Miss Lynch, too, is deserting us, 'for good and all,' as you say ?"

"She don't mean to come back *at all*, papa ?" cried Regi, overwhelmed. In vain he attempted to assume an expression of proper solemnity. He drew down the corners of his mouth, he forced his brows to meet in a

frown, but a jubilant sense of freedom from unloved rule rushed over him with resistless power. Looking into Fred's eyes, he saw there a sympathetic sparkle, and even Mr. Standish broke down in a smile.

"Yes, she is to remain to take charge of a young ladies' boarding-school in the town where her sister lives. She meant well, Regi, that excellent governess of yours; but Miss Lynch was one of my mistakes."

"Nothing seems wonderful to me any longer," Regi said, his conscience smiting him in recalling the years of long companionship during which the absent lady had taken faithful care of his bodily and mental parts; and in wondering what made it impossible for him to lament her.

"Let us try to remember the good in her," began Mr. Standish.

"To ease our consciences," said Fred, mischievously; and then, all finding the question of Miss Lynch as difficult to handle as a prickly-pear, they by common consent put it away from them. The evening sped rapidly in pleasant chat between the father and his sons. Never had Regi seen his father so kind, so sympathetic. When nine o'clock came, and the boy was about to go to bed, Mr. Standish clasped him once more around the shoulders and, holding him there, looked down into his clear brown eyes.

"Yes, it was a mistake—a mistake," he repeated, as if to himself, "but not the worst one I have made. Regi!" he added, abruptly; "did you ever hear that your father has a sister?"

"Oh, yes, papa; don't you remember the pen came from her—the old quill pen that told me about"—the Lutin and Blanquette, he was going to add, but was

interrupted by his father speaking in a dreamy kind of way.

"Yes, you knew that you have an aunt, of course, and that she lives abroad. But you never knew that she was once the dearest person in the world to me, until I married; your mother loved her too, and often implored me to take her back into my affections. I was her guardian, and she lived with us till Fred was nine years old."

"I can remember Aunt Marian perfectly," said Fred. "She was my idea of an angel, in looks."

"She was so in disposition," Mr. Standish said. "Boys, there are some things one gains nothing by bringing back again after they are safely in their graves. Perhaps it was all my fault, though I lay much of it to the misfortune of a certain moroseness of nature that has isolated me from many I loved. Marian married against my wishes; married a man I told her I would never receive under my roof. Too proud to come to me without her husband, my sister then and there went out of my life, as if she had never been. When a child was born to her, she wrote to me affectionately, and I answered her in the same spirit. At that time her husband was ailing in health, and they were living in Southern Europe for the climate. Since then, he has died; and, for a time, in Marian's grief, she turned from me again, as from one who——Look up at me, Regi boy, and say that you don't think your father the cold-blooded creature he seemed to her to be."

Regi pressed his cheek against his father's hand, caressing it in silence that meant more than words.

"Go on, father, won't you?" Fred said. "The pleasant part is yet to come."

"A few weeks since, your aunt wrote to me, regretting our separation. She felt her loneliness, and desired to renew our correspondence."

"And then, father?" urged Fred, exultingly.

"And then, little Regi—for your brother has been for some time in my confidence—I sent a cable message urging her to come at once to share my home. An answer came—'Expect me.'"

"Oh, papa!" cried Regi, joyfully. "There was never anything so nice, except—except your telling me yourself! And when will Aunt Marian be here?"

"When I cabled again to find out what steamer she would take, she had already left her lodgings in Paris, and I have no means of knowing her movements afterwards. She will of course telegraph me from the ship to meet her, and that should be very soon. God grant that it may be very, very soon!"

The boys had never seen their father moved like this. Each seized a hand and fondled it, till the little scene was broken in upon by Barnes, with his usual impassive face, coming in to make some announcement in Mr. Frederic's ear, which caused the young man to start and color, and quickly leave the room.

A moment later there was a flurry in the hall, footsteps were heard and strange voices, and, without more ado, the heavy tapestry across the door was pushed aside, and Fred appeared, holding by the hand a tall and lovely lady all in black.

What need to tell Regi that this was his beautiful Aunt Marian, even had she not thrown herself with a sob into her brother's arms, crying and laughing by turns, and telling him she had chosen to come unannounced across the wintry sea, because she wanted to convince him that he had done enough in bidding her.

What need, I say, when Regi recognized the *original of the photograph with the frame of sparkling stones?*

He, in fact, knew more about matters, or thought he did, than anybody present; but he was not at all prepared for what followed, after his aunt had folded him in her arms, kissing him with a pair of velvet lips softer than any that had ever touched his orphaned cheek, calling him her own, her darling, her most precious little Regi. This pleasant experience was hardly at an end, before she glided to the door, and returned, leading a—wonder of wonders—a live boy, almost if not exactly his own size!

"So it wasn't for Uncle Nathaniel," remarked Regi, with an abruptness that took everybody by surprise, leaving them to discover, at their leisure, that he alluded to the new brass bed upstairs. The two boys, after performing, in the limpest possible manner, the exchange of greetings suggested to them by their elders, eyed each other like two strange cats. When things had settled down a little, they were observed to gravitate toward each other, and Regi, opening the conversation as became the host, remarked, in a matter-of-fact fashion:

"If you're collecting stamps, I've some ten centavos Guatemalas I'd like to trade for Chilis."

They were soon scampering about the hall with Bran at their heels, making more noise than had been heard since the building of the house. When, by-and-by, Regi found that, like himself, Aunt Marian's boy was named Arthur, in memory of their grandfather, he was delighted.

"If you've got half my name, you ought to have half of everything. I'll give you the tail end of Bran, even; and you'll live here, always, and be exactly like my

"She glided to the door, and returned, leading a live boy, almost if not exactly his own size."

brother. And, I say, Arthur, if you like stories, there are lots I'll tell you—splendid ones, that I've never even told to Fred."

And then, Aunt Marian, clasping both children to her loving heart, promised Regi it should be as he had said!

THE END.

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